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Office of the Sheriff

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February 15, 2024

TO: Sheriff Steven A. Hall, St. Mary's County, Maryland

SUBJECT: Analysis of Officer Use of Force for 2023

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. Vesting deputies with the authority to use reasonable force and to protect the public welfare requires monitoring, evaluation, and a careful balancing of all interests. In 2022, a new Use of Force Policy was released which included new Maryland statutes. The new policy was utilized through 2023 as well.

The following is an analysis of the use of force reported by deputy sheriffs of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office during the period of January 1 through December 31, 2023. Data for the analysis was derived from the collection of the Use of Force reports completed by deputies and reviewed by supervision. Policy and Maryland Law requires deputies immediately notify a supervisor when force is utilized and complete a Use of Force report by the end of their shift. Once the reports are reviewed by supervision, they are forwarded to the Office of Professional Responsibilities (OPR) for additional review and potential investigation where a determination is made if the force used by the deputy was justified.

Sheriff's Office Use of Force Policy 300.1.1 defines "Force" as *"The application of physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents, or weapons to another person. It is not a use of force when a person allows him/herself to be searched, escorted, handcuffed, or restrained."*

In 2023, the Sheriff's Office handled 73,402 calls for service. Calls for service include requests for police assistance originating from the public as well as self-initiated events made by deputy sheriffs. There were 225 calls for service that involved a Use of Force incident by one or more deputies. This includes Show of Force incidents where the deputy pointed a firearm or Taser at a person without discharging the device and the person complied with the officer's commands. The above data equates to force being utilized once every 326 calls for service or .3%

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The percentages of the total Use of Force Incidents showing the most common reasons for deputies using force are as follows:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
• Effect an Arrest	57%	58%	63%
• Emergency Petition	33%	34%	34%

The percentages of the total Use of Force incidents where a citizen or officer was injured are as follows:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
• Citizens Injured	3%	4%	16%
• Officer Injured	<1%	8%	10%

The percentage of citizens injured decreased in 2023, and this can be attributed to the continued Use of Force training, the requirement for de-escalation tactics when feasible, and the Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training that was received by deputies in 2023. ICAT training was developed by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). The program consists of law enforcement de-escalation training through lectures, case studies, and scenario-based exercises.

In 2023 there were 210 total K-9 usages and zero (0) instances when the K-9 was deployed (released from their lead) in an attempt to apprehend a suspect. There were four (4) instances when the K-9 was deployed (released from their lead) for building searches. The majority of K-9 usages were for scans of vehicles for illegal drugs.

In 2022 the Sheriff's Office implemented a system to categorize uses of force (for post force reporting only) on three different levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, and those levels continued to be utilized through 2023. Level 1 is the category used for minor uses of force (ie: wrist lock, escort hold, carry) which have the lowest risk of injury. Level 2 is for uses of force and less lethal options (ie: Knee strike, Takedown, Taser, Chemical agents) with a higher risk of injury. Level 3 is for any force that results in death, has the risk of causing death, or the discharge of any firearms towards a person. In 2023, 88% of all uses of force were categorized as Level 1, 12% as Level 2, and 0% as Level 3.

The following statistics indicate the percentage of the total uses of force incidents (225) compared to the demographic breakdown of the citizens when force was applied by the deputies:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
White Males	23%	27%	26%
White Females	17%	14%	17%
Black Males	42%	33%	36%
Black Females	15%	22%	18%
Hispanic Males	3%	2%	2%
Hispanic Females	0%	1%	<1%
Other Males	0%	0%	0%
Other Females	0%	0%	0%

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There were 808 force types reported by deputies in 2023. The following indicates the number and percentage of each type of force used by deputies. Each use of force incident (225 calls for service in 2023) may include more than one force type being used and more than one officer using force:

<u>Force Type</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Arm Bar	37	4.5%
Arm Bar Take Down	21	2.6%
Arm Control	0	
Asp/Baton	0	
Carry	57	7.1%
Common Peroneal Strike	1	<1%
Def Tec 40mm	1	<1%
Emergency Response Belt	0	
Escort hold	138	17.1%
FN 303	0	
Forearm Strike	2	<1%
Grab – Below Neckline	72	8.9%
Hand push	40	5%
Hand Restrain	83	10.3%
Hand Strike	1	<1%
Handgun Discharge	0	
Handgun Pointed Only	49	6.1%
Head Control	17	2.1%
Kick	0	
Knee Strike	1	<1%
Leg Sweep	15	1.9%
OC Spray	1	<1%
Pressure Point	9	1.1%
Punch	3	<1%
Restraint/Shoulders	24	3%
Rifle Discharge	0	
Rifle Pointed Only	4	<1%
Sage	1	<1%
Secured Legs	60	7.4%
Secured wrist	101	12.5%
Tackle	16	2%
Taser Deployment	11	1.4%
Taser Pointed Only	13	1.6%
Wrist Lock	30	3.7%
Total	808	

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In conclusion, Escort Holds, Secured Wrist, Hand Restrain, and Grab below the neckline were the most common types of force used in 2023 and the Taser was deployed eleven (11) times. Compared to 2022, Escort Holds, Secured Wrist, Hand Restrain, and Handgun Pointed Only were the most common types of force used and the Taser was deployed thirteen (13) times.



Thomas A. Hedderich
Lieutenant
Office of Professional Responsibilities

Agree

☒ Yes () No, see indorsement.

Major:



Date 2-15-24

☒ Yes () No, see indorsement.

Sheriff:



Date 2/15/24