



ARKANSAS STATE POLICE

ASP-3
(Rev. 09/00)

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Date: NOVEMBER 1, 2024
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CASE FILE SUMMARY

I received a complaint package on October 15, 2024, containing a Department of Public Safety (DPS) 112-2, Complaint and Tracking Form signed by Amanda Prince, a member of the public. The complaint alleged a possible policy and procedure violation against Trooper First Class (TFC.) Christian Morphis for violation of DPS 108: Rules of Conduct.

Facts

On December 17, 2023, TFC. Christian Morphis stopped and arrested Ms. Amanda Prince for driving on a suspended license. Ms. Prince was transported to the Drew County Jail. While at the jail, TFC. Morphis had Ms. Prince step out of the back of his patrol car. In doing so, Morphis observed a baggie in the backseat floorboard. Morphis grabbed a glove from his front passenger seat and retrieved the baggie containing a solid white substance, later identified as cocaine.

Morphis charged Ms. Prince with crimes related to the cocaine to include Possession with Intent to Deliver, Tampering with Physical Evidence, and Obstructing Governmental Operations. Morphis contacted Tenth Judicial Drug Task Force (DTF) Agent James Slaughter to transfer the case for prosecution. On December 19, 2023, Ms. Prince had her first appearance in front of Drew County Circuit Judge Robert Gibson; he set her a commercial bond of \$5,000. Agent Slaughter filed the charges with the prosecutor the same day. Morphis completed and submitted his ASP incident report through his chain of command on December 23, 2023. The report was approved on December 24, 2023. The report noted specific details regarding movement and actions of Ms. Prince to support the charges. These details were also communicated to Agent Slaughter, which was reflected in his case file. Ms. Prince later pled Not Guilty to the charges. The case was set for Jury Trial on September 20, 2024. Daniel Wigley was the Deputy Prosecutor trying the case. Ms. Prince was represented by Public Defender Tim Leonard. The trial was 1-Day with an end result of Not Guilty on behalf of Ms. Prince.

I spoke with both Daniel Wigley and Tim Leonard about the case and subsequent complaint. They both advised the case was lost in court due to the jurors not being able to see on the video where Ms. Prince could have discarded the narcotics.

Information from Complaint and Tracking Form

Amanda Prince began her complaint stating, "The actions taken by these officers not only violated my civil rights, but also demonstrate a blatant disregard for the law and ethical conduct expected from law enforcement personnel." Ms. Prince provided details of the incident. She explained: "During my arrest for driving while suspended, I was subjected to an unlawful search of my vehicle based on unfounded assumptions and a lack of probable cause. Despite my clear statements that I possessed no illegal items, the officers persisted in their invasive actions, exhibiting intimidation and harassment throughout the encounter. The subsequent baseless charges against me-including

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possession of cocaine-were not only unfounded but were also dismissed in court due to a complete lack of evidence.”

Ms. Prince continues, stating, “It has come to my attention that video evidence indicates the potential planting of drugs by Officer Walker Morphis, which raises severe concerns regarding the integrity of this officer and the department as a whole. Such behavior is unacceptable and undermines public trust in law enforcement.”

Ms. Prince noted several actions that she felt was a violation of her civil rights. Amongst those included:

- **False Arrest** – “The unfounded charges brought against me constitute a clear case of false arrest and malicious prosecution.”
- **Intimidation and Coercion** – “The officers involved engaged in conduct designed to intimidate, creating a hostile environment that is entirely unacceptable.”
- **Loss of Property** – “I lost my deceased father’s truck because I couldn’t afford to get it out of impound.”
- **Fabrication of evidence**
- **Defamation** – “This arrest has publicly humiliated me, has cost me my job, my children and family.”
- **Emotional Distress**
- **Perjury** – “He testified under oath that the drugs were mine.”

Information from Interview

Trooper First Class Christian Morphis

I interviewed TFC. Christian Morphis at Arkansas State Police Headquarters in Little Rock on October 30, 2024.

We first discussed prior encounters with Amanda Prince where she was stopped and charged accordingly for driving with a suspended license. Ms. Prince was never previously found to be in possession of any controlled substances and did not have any possession charges/cases pending. However, TFC. Morphis explained he’s heard by “word of mouth” from DTF and people in the community that Ms. Prince is known to carry controlled substances, methamphetamine in particular.

We discussed the traffic stop and arrest on December 17, 2023. Morphis explained his probable cause for stopping Ms. Prince was due to her being the registered owner of the truck and him knowing her license was suspended. According to the video, Morphis was condescending in his tone/demeanor and displayed a disdainful attitude. He had her step out of the truck before he introduced/identified himself and provided a reason for the stop {*bias-based policing statement*}. Ms. Prince was subsequently handcuffed behind her back and placed in the backseat of the patrol car. Prince was not searched or patted down prior to being placed in the backseat. When questioned why he proceeded to handle Ms. Prince in that manner, Morphis explained, “I had a pathetic attitude... there was a string of 6 to 8 months where I had a pathetic attitude.” Morphis expressed frustrations

“I had an attitude problem... I’m aware of that... I’m working on it.” Morphis had no explanation why he didn’t search Ms. Prince, other than he was mad he was at work and mad he was dealing with

her again. Morphis stated he had "tunnel-vision" on searching the truck and getting her to the jail. TFC. Morphis and former Trooper Tyler Grant searched the truck and didn't find any contraband.

Morphis eventually transported Ms. Prince to the Drew County detention center. Morphis stated he didn't seatbelt Ms. Prince because he didn't want to bend over, being lazy; alluding back to the earlier mentioned "pathetic attitude." While at the jail, Morphis explained he asked Ms. Prince to step out of the patrol car; In doing so, he noticed a bag at her feet. Morphis explained he asked her to go stand in front of his patrol car; he grabbed a glove from this front passenger seat and retrieved the bag from the backseat floorboard. Morphis stated he initially thought it was "meth;" he presented it to Ms. Prince, to which she immediately denied it was hers. The investigation revealed TFC. Morphis went to the Take 5 Carwash in Monticello, prior to making contact with Ms. Prince. Morphis arrived at the carwash at approximately 3:02 p.m. He entered the vacuum area at approximately 3:06 p.m. He was at the vacuum area for approximately 4 minutes, prior to leaving the carwash at approximately 3:11 p.m. Morphis initiated the traffic stop on Ms. Prince at approximately 3:47 p.m.

When Ms. Prince denied possessing the substance, Morphis explained, "I had just left the carwash and I didn't see it, so it had to be hers. I put everything in when I vacuumed out my backseat that bag of dope was not there... I didn't see that bag of dope, and I know she was the only person in my backseat after vacuuming it out." To the best he could remember, Morphis claimed he vacuumed out the back floorboard where Ms. Prince was sitting. Amidst Ms. Prince's denial of possessing the substance, Morphis told her all he had to do was pull his camera back. When I initially asked Morphis if he reviewed his camera footage prior to charging Ms. Prince with the crimes, he stated, "If I did... I don't remember...but if I did, I know I would have reviewed it on my little screen," meaning the in-car video monitor. Morphis again reiterated that he based everything off the fact he was just at the carwash, and he didn't see the bag, therefore assuming it to be hers.

I then referenced Morphis ASP incident report where he noted specific things related to the review of his backseat camera. Specifically, he wrote, "*A review of my backseat camera revealed Ms. Prince moving very erratically for a short period of time and appeared to be digging in her waistline shortly before the narcotics were found.*" Morphis then stated, "If I typed it... then I reviewed it." I emphasized the details he wrote, stressing that would have been a key point in his reasoning for the charges he filed on Ms. Prince. Prince was not only charged with Possession with intent to Deliver cocaine – Class A Felony, but she was also charged with Tampering with Physical Evidence and Obstructing Governmental Operations. Morphis only noted one time, earlier in the stop while at the scene waiting for the tow truck, where Ms. Prince turned her head and body slightly, while looking out the window. Morphis described this as "erratic movement," despite the definition. Again, I explained to Morphis that he would have had to review his entire stop, which was approximately 42 minutes long to find that movement, which contradicts what he wrote in his incident report. The investigation revealed TFC. Morphis made another traffic stop that day at approximately 5:39 p.m. and was approximately 20 miles from the jail. Morphis had already left the jail and charged Ms. Prince with the crimes before any such review could have taken place.

Regarding Ms. Prince appearing to be digging in her waistline; I explained to Morphis that never occurred! Ms. Prince hands were on top of her shirt the entire time. Morphis could not recall any points in the video where she was observed doing this action, however he wrote it in his report. I played a segment of the video, leading to where Prince was turning her head looking out the window. Morphis admitted that he could see her hands on top of her shirt. Furthermore, I explained to Morphis that we conducted a demonstration with a handcuffed individual (included in file) to determine the amount of minimal movement it would take to maneuver a bag of substance (similar

size) from the back waistline, down to her feet/floorboard. Based on the demonstration, I can confidently say that didn't occur with the amount of movement in Ms. Prince's case. Not only did he write this in his incident report, Morphis also told DTF agent James Slaughter *"the in-patrol car camera shows Prince moving around in the rear seat of the patrol car. Trooper Morphis stated Prince turned all the way around at one time and this is when he believes she dropped the bag of white substance."* However, Morphis told me there was never a specific time where he thought Ms. Prince discarded the substance, despite the additional charges.

Morphis contacted DTF on or about December 17, 2023, to refer the case for prosecution. Morphis transferred the substance to Agent Slaughter on December 19, 2023; Slaughter filed the Probable Cause Declaration with the prosecuting attorney the same day (see case TF23-400-05 included in file). Slaughter submitted the case file based off what TFC. Morphis told him regarding the events. Morphis did not submit his ASP incident report through his chain of command until December 23, 2023. This incident report was never included in the case file or provided for prosecution. TFC. Morphis could not provide an explanation as to why not, which I advised was questionable. Morphis later agreed he never watched the entire stop before charging Ms. Prince with said charges. Morphis had no explanation for stating Ms. Prince appeared to be digging in her waistline, other than maybe him fast-forwarding through segments of the video on his small in-car monitor. I stressed the seriousness of the charges and affect it could have on a person's life. Ms. Prince was facing 6 to 30 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$15,000; fortunately, she was found not guilty. Morphis expressed this arrest took place during a time when he was dealing with additional homelife stress. He expressed he never intended to lie or be malicious about anything related to his dealings with Ms. Prince. Morphis stated this arrest was rushed, which contributed to poor police work. Morphis classified his actions as immature and complacent. We then transitioned the discussion to how the controlled substance ended up in his backseat floorboard.

This investigation warranted me to review previous traffic stops and criminal arrest to see who was in the backseat before Ms. Prince. In doing so, I noticed TFC. Morphis stopped a black Chevy Camaro on December 14, 2023, for a speeding/reckless driving violation. Former Trooper Tyler Grant was also present for this stop. Again, Morphis approached this driver with the same condescending tone, displaying a disdainful attitude. When Morphis had the driver step out of the car, video shows him putting his left hand in the overalls, in an attempt to conceal something. Trooper Grant saw this maneuver, but only retrieved some lighters and a wad of cash from the man's overall pocket. It is my belief the subject was trying to get the narcotics to drop down his pants leg. Video shows him inconspicuously placing his left hand back inside his overall's on more than one occasion, even after the cash was removed. The subject would turn away from the Troopers to aid in his concealment.

Morphis eventually handcuffed the subject and proceeded to place him in the backseat of his patrol car. Neither Trooper conducted a thorough search of the individual (running hands down pants legs or removing shoes) before doing so. While in the backseat, video shows frantic movement and the subject states to himself, "Fuck... I should have threw this shit out mane... Fuck!" It is also important to note this individual was in possession of \$3,600 cash and a loaded firearm. Morphis later transported this subject to jail, also without seat belting. Prior to arriving at the jail, Morphis told the subject if there was anything in his pockets (illegal contraband) that he was bringing into the jail, would constitute a felony. At this point, video shows the subject moving erratically, focused down at his feet. Based on my training and experience, it is my belief that this is when the subject discarded the narcotics in the floorboard.

We reviewed this traffic stop video during the interview. Morphis agreed it was highly likely the narcotics were discarded from the December 14th arrest. I reiterated the lack of due diligence regarding the charges filed against Ms. Prince. Morphis humbly understood and accepted my viewpoints. In conclusion, Morphis plans to learn from this experience; he expressed self-reflection, actively on a path of improvement.