Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training
Peace Officer Standards Accountability Division
860 Stillwater Road, Suite 100
West Sacramento, CA 95605
www.post.ca.gov

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

POST makes the following information available to the public pursuant to Penal Code §13510.85(c) which establishes that POST shall publish the names of any peace officer whose certification has been suspended or revoked and the basis for the suspension or revocation.

CASE NO.: POST2307145

SUBJECT OFFICER: Austin T. Venegas **POST ID:** C72-C85

EMPLOYING AGENCY: Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

ALLEGED MISCONDUCT: 13510.8(b)(1)/11 CCR 1205(a)(1) – Dishonesty

CASE SUMMARY:

On April 27, 2023, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) submitted a serious misconduct complaint to POST against Deputy Austin T. Venegas, hereafter "Respondent", alleging that Respondent made several false statements during the course of an internal investigation into his misconduct. Following POST's investigation and review, POST found, by clear and convincing evidence, that reasonable grounds existed for consideration of revocation pursuant to Penal Code 13510.8. A summary of the investigative findings of the Division are as follows:

On June 10, 2020, Respondent, while off-duty, was detained by the San Bernadino County Sheriff's Department (SBSD) during an on-going sex trafficking/prostitution operation. Respondent failed to report the detention to his employer, a violation of Department Policy. On April 13, 2021, while being interviewed during an internal investigation into his conduct on June 10, 2020, Respondent made several false, misleading, and self-serving statements to investigators in direct conflict with his statements to the San Bernadino Human Trafficking Task Force Sheriff's Deputies.

ANALYSIS/FINDINGS:

1. **The alleged misconduct violated Penal Code Section 13510.8 (b)(1) and Title 11, California Code of Regulations Section 1205 (a)(1) – Dishonesty**

Penal Code Section 13510.8 (b)(1) and Commission Regulation 1205 (a)(1) defines as serious misconduct "Dishonesty relating to the reporting, investigation, or prosecution of a crime, or relating to the reporting of, or investigation of misconduct by, a peace officer or custodial officer, including, but not limited to, false statements…"

Clear and convincing evidence supports dishonesty occurred in relation to the investigation of misconduct by a peace officer, in the form of false and misleading statements made by the Respondent. This is supported by statements made by the Witness Deputy and Respondent during the LASD administrative investigation, and transcripts of Respondent's recorded interview while being detained by San Bernardino Sheriff's Deputies at the time of the incident.

Dishonest Statement #1
Respondent told IA investigations, "I Googled massage parlors near me. One popped up. It was literally two minutes, three minutes away from me, I believe. From there I got the number, I called". "It was the nearest one". "Yeah, it just popped up and I clicked it". "It literally just popped up near me, I clicked the link, and the number already…. Was already posted up with the, the suite number, the address, the phone number."

Evidence of Falsity
Respondent told the SBSD Deputies, "I'll be straight up. I found that place out from one of my friends... and he told me it was one of those type of massage parlors…. Basically, you call in, call in, go in, pay the lady"

Dishonest Statement #2
Respondent told IA investigators, "She asked me 'for how long would you like'? I said for an hour. Okay come on in. It's going to be… like, I believe $50. From there I ended up proceeding giving her the $50 in cash."

Evidence of Falsity
When the SBSD Deputies asked him if he paid $50 at the door and $120 to the girl, he said, "yeah".

Dishonest Statement #3
Respondent told IA investigators when it was clear the masseuse's intentions were to solicit for sex he said, "I'm okay. I'm, I'm good, I'm good. She said, 'full service, are you sure' and that's when I said "no, no, no, no, I'm, I'm good. She said, its only $100… I believe $120. And at that point I was like, no I'm o…I'm okay. And that's when I started getting up and just putting my clothes on and started exiting out of the room. She followed a little bit. Are

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you sure you're okay? Are you okay? And I didn't answer. I continued going and exited the building at that point."

Evidence of Falsity
When SBSD Deputies questioned Respondent, they asked him, "Did you get full service in there?" and Respondent replied, "Yeah, it was".

Dishonest Statement #4
Respondent told LASD IA investigators that one of the SBSD Deputies asked him, "Do you know where you came from?" to which he replied, "I thought it was a regular massage parlor but I'm guessing you guys know it's a little bit more than that".

Evidence of Falsity
The SBSD audio recording shows Respondent stated, "I'll be straight up. I found that place out from one of my friends… and he told me it was one of those type of massage parlors".

Dishonest Statement #5
Respondent told IA investigators he only paid $50 for the back massage, when he was in the lobby and didn't pay for the "full service".

Evidence of Falsity
When the SBSD Deputies asked him, "so full service? You paid a total of $170?", Respondent replied, "Well, yeah, and … yeah. Yeah, so…". At which time SBSD Deputies confirmed, "$50 at the door and then $120?" and Respondent said, "yeah"

OUTCOME/IMPOSITION OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST PEACE OFFICER CERTIFICATION:

The Peace Officer Standards Accountability Division determined that reasonable grounds existed to seek revocation of the Respondent's certifications in this case. A notice of intent to revoke was served on October 1, 2024. Respondent did not file a request for review within the 30-day response period, pursuant to Penal Code section 13510.85 (a)(2), thus resulting in default revocation of Respondent's certification with no further proceedings. On November 22, 2024, the default order was issued and served on Respondent. Respondent Austin Venegas's (POST2307145) (POST ID: C72-C85) peace officer certification was revoked on November 22, 2024.