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Video shows deputy hitting driver deck

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About 45 seconds after they stop the car, three sheriff's deputies pull its driver from his seat. As Devante Antwan Pittman stands flanked by uniformed men, a third deputy grabs the motorist's head with his left hand and punches Pittman with his right.

The 19-year-old appears in a video to offer no resistance. What's being said isn't heard.

Pittman keels over after the punch. Charleston County sheriff's Deputy Christopher Davis then delivers five more uppercut jabs to Pittman's face, and the motorist falls to the pavement.

Ninety seconds after the stop, Pittman is in handcuffs, questioning the reason for his treatment and his arrest.

"Shut the (expletive) up!" Davis yells at him. "You are going to jail. ... You don't like it, you don't grab me!"

Pittman's alleged grab and attempt to pull Davis into his car isn't apparent in two videos captured from the deputies' cruiser. Static distorts a crucial portion that shows Davis reaching into the car, but it's difficult to discern whether he is yanked toward it.

The grab served as the basis for Pittman's arrest - his first - on a charge of third-degree assault and battery.

The six punches Pittman's face absorbed, which knocked out teeth, prompted a State Law Enforcement Division investigation and a lawsuit seeking financial compensation against the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office and SLED declined to comment. Davis was placed on paid leave; the other two deputies remain on patrol.

"There was no grab," said Pittman's attorney, Lionel Lofton of Daniel Island. "I can't imagine he would have done anything to provoke these people."

The video, which was released Monday night after The Post and Courier filed a Freedom of Information Act request, shows how rapidly the incident unfolded late on Nov. 11.

Deputies reported spotting Pittman's Dodge Charger turning without a signal from Savannah Highway onto Orleans Road, where he lives. Pittman stops his car near the West Ashley Shoppes complex on Orleans.

As one deputy strolls to the passenger side of Pittman's car, Davis walks to the driver's window and shines a flashlight inside.

Seconds later, Davis pokes the lamp into the car. That's when the deputies reported that Pittman grabbed Davis.

Through his attorney, Pittman disputed the account. Instead, Davis struck his face with the flashlight as he fetched his insurance papers, his attorney said.

The video shows two other deputies running into the scene, placing themselves on either side of Davis and grappling with Pittman. Once they free the driver from his seat belt, Davis holsters his flashlight and uses two hands to straighten Pittman's head.

The half-dozen punches ensue. Each time, Davis angles his arm to make contact with Pittman's face.

Pittman does not appear to kick his legs or move his arms in self-defense. He falls and is handcuffed.

Though distorted, audio depicts Pittman and the deputy arguing after the arrest. "You grabbed me!" Davis says.

"You're going to jail," Davis repeats 16 minutes after what the deputies said was a "brief struggle." "You're going to jail."

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