

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
IN COURT OF APPEALS
A25-0121**

State of Minnesota,
Respondent,

vs.

Jotee Marga Camadaa,
Appellant.

**Filed January 26, 2026
Affirmed
Wheelock, Judge**

Ramsey County District Court
File No. 62-CR-23-5063

Keith Ellison, Attorney General, St. Paul, Minnesota; and

Irene Kao, St. Paul City Attorney, George Ho, Assistant City Attorney, St. Paul, Minnesota
(for respondent)

Anders J. Erickson, Johnson Erickson Criminal Defense, Minneapolis, Minnesota (for
appellant)

Considered and decided by Larkin, Presiding Judge; Wheelock, Judge; and
Halbrooks, Judge.*

* Retired judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, serving by appointment pursuant to
Minn. Const. art. VI, § 10.

NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION

WHEELLOCK, Judge

In this direct appeal from the judgment of conviction, appellant argues that the district court erred by denying his motion to suppress evidence obtained from a traffic stop because the officer did not have reasonable articulable suspicion to believe appellant committed a traffic violation. We affirm.

FACTS

Respondent State of Minnesota charged appellant Jotee Marga Camadaa with driving while impaired (DWI) in the fourth degree. Camadaa waived his right to a jury trial and submitted his case to the district court pursuant to Minnesota Rule of Criminal Procedure 26.01, subdivision 4, thereby preserving appellate review of the pretrial ruling on his motion to suppress. We derive the following facts from evidence submitted at the hearing on Camadaa's motion to suppress.

Around midnight on August 29, 2023, a St. Paul police officer was working a "Towards Zero Deaths" detail that focused on DWI enforcement.¹ The officer was traveling east and approaching an intersection with a stop sign. The intersecting northbound street was a one-way with two lanes also controlled by stop signs. The officer saw, on the northbound street, two vehicles approaching the intersection. He testified to seeing a Toyota Camry—the driver of which was later determined to be Camadaa—in the right lane and a truck in the left lane.

¹ The officer testified that "Towards Zero Deaths" is a state and national effort to reduce traffic accidents and fatalities.

The truck arrived at the intersection first and made a complete stop. The truck was closer to the officer and obstructed the officer's view of Camadaa's vehicle; however, because the officer could see underneath the truck, he could still see Camadaa's rear lights and wheels, and he observed that Camadaa's vehicle did not make a complete stop before turning right at the intersection. The officer testified that Camadaa could not have made a complete stop because the truck and Camadaa completed their turns simultaneously, even though the truck arrived at the intersection first.

The northbound street has two stop signs, one for the right lane and one for the left. The stop sign for the right lane (Camadaa's lane) is farther back from the intersection than the stop sign for the left lane, but no evidence presented at the hearing established the distance of each stop sign from the intersection or the difference in their distances. The officer testified that he was not familiar with the intersection and that he only saw the stop sign for the left lane. However, when informed of the second stop sign while testifying, the officer stated he would not change his testimony that Camadaa did not come to a stop. The officer also testified that, after the traffic stop, he reviewed footage from his vehicle's dash camera and observed that Camadaa drove over and touched the lane's traffic lines after Camadaa completed his turn at the intersection.

After Camadaa made the right turn, the officer initiated a traffic stop for failure to come to a complete stop at the controlled intersection. The officer then observed Camadaa display signs of impairment, and the officer conducted field sobriety tests and administered a preliminary breath test (PBT) to Camadaa that indicated an alcohol concentration above the legal limit. The officer arrested Camadaa.

After the hearing, the district court denied Camadaa's motion to suppress, determining that the officer had reasonable articulable suspicion to conduct an investigatory stop of Camadaa's vehicle. The district court reviewed the officer's dash-camera footage, found it consistent with the officer's testimony and his incident report, and found the officer's testimony credible.

Following a court trial, the district court found Camadaa guilty of fourth-degree DWI and sentenced him to 30 days in jail, stayed for one year, and one year of unsupervised probation. It also imposed a fine and ordered him to comply with programming.

Camadaa appeals the denial of his motion to suppress.

DECISION

"When reviewing a district court's pretrial order on a motion to suppress evidence, 'we review the district court's factual findings under a clearly erroneous standard and the district court's legal determinations de novo.'" *State v. Gauster*, 752 N.W.2d 496, 502 (Minn. 2008) (quoting *State v. Jordan*, 742 N.W.2d 149, 152 (Minn. 2007)). "We give great deference to a district court's findings of fact and will not set them aside unless clearly erroneous." *State v. Andersen*, 784 N.W.2d 320, 334 (Minn. 2010). "Findings of fact are clearly erroneous if, on the entire evidence, we are left with the definite and firm conviction that a mistake occurred." *Id.*

The United States and Minnesota Constitutions prohibit "unreasonable searches and seizures." U.S. Const. amend. IV; Minn. Const. art. I, § 10. "Generally, if evidence is seized in violation of the constitution, it must be suppressed." *State v. Taylor*, 965 N.W.2d 747, 752 (Minn. 2021). For an investigatory seizure or stop to be reasonable, an officer

“must be able to point to specific and articulable acts which, taken together with rational inferences from those facts, reasonably warrant that intrusion.” *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 21 (1968).

“The reasonable-suspicion standard is not high.” *State v. Morse*, 878 N.W.2d 499, 502 (Minn. 2016) (quoting *State v. Diede*, 795 N.W.2d 836, 843 (Minn. 2011)). An investigatory stop is justified “so long as the facts support at least one inference of the possibility of criminal activity.” *State v. Klamar*, 823 N.W.2d 687, 693 (Minn. App. 2012) (quotation omitted). While this is a “low hurdle,” the officer’s suspicion must be based on more than a mere hunch, whim, or idle curiosity. *Taylor*, 965 N.W.2d at 757; accord *State v. Johnson*, 444 N.W.2d 824, 827 (Minn. 1989).

“Ordinarily, if an officer observes a violation of a traffic law, however insignificant, the officer has an objective basis for stopping the vehicle.” *State v. George*, 557 N.W.2d 575, 578 (Minn. 1997). However, “[a]n actual violation of the vehicle and traffic laws need not be detectable.” *State v. Pike*, 551 N.W.2d 919, 921 (Minn. 1996). In evaluating conflicting evidence, “the district court has the discretion to draw its own conclusions and make factual findings from its independent review of a video recording of a traffic stop.” *State v. Shellito*, 594 N.W.2d 182, 186 (Minn. App. 1999).

Camadaa first contends that the officer made an unreasonable mistake of law that cannot give rise to reasonable suspicion under the Fourth Amendment. The officer’s mistake of law, Camadaa argues, was that the officer believed that the law required Camadaa to come to a complete stop at the intersection after having already stopped at the

stop sign in his lane.² However, there was no mistake of law here.³ The officer did not testify that Camadaa was required to come to two separate stops, that he understood any law to require this, or that it formed the basis of the traffic stop. This is not a situation in which an officer misunderstood a statute.

Camadaa also argues, in briefing to this court, that the district court erred because its order describes that Camadaa failed to make a complete stop at the intersection, without acknowledging that there were two stop signs—one for the right lane and one for the left lane. We understand Camadaa’s argument to be based on his concern that the district court’s order reflects that it did not understand that there were two stop signs for northbound traffic at the intersection.

Based on our review of the officer’s dash-camera footage, we agree that the district court used imprecise language to describe the events depicted in that footage. However, we are not persuaded that we must read the district court’s order so narrowly. The parties agree that Camadaa was required to make a complete stop before entering the intersection. The district court determined that Camadaa failed to come to a complete stop before entering the intersection, and this finding is supported by the record. The district court had

² “Every driver of a vehicle shall stop at a stop sign or at a clearly marked stop line before entering the intersection, except when directed to proceed by a police officer or traffic-control signal.” Minn. Stat. § 169.30(b) (2022). The stop-sign statute is violated “when the driver of a vehicle drives past the stop sign or stop line before coming to a complete stop.” *State v. Gibson*, 945 N.W.2d 855, 859 (Minn. 2020).

³ We observe that the United States Supreme Court has held that officers may base reasonable suspicion on their objectively reasonable mistake of law. *Heien v. North Carolina*, 574 U.S. 54, 60-61 (2014).

the discretion to draw its own conclusions from its independent review of the footage. *See Shellito*, 594 N.W.2d at 186. It did so here and determined that Camadaa failed to stop at the intersection.

But whether the district court correctly determined that Camadaa failed to come to a stop is not the dispositive question on whether the traffic stop was justified, because an actual traffic violation need not be detectable. *See Pike*, 551 N.W.2d at 921. The dispositive question is whether the officer was able to provide “specific and articulable facts, which, taken together with rational inferences from those facts, reasonably warrant[ed]” the traffic stop. *Id.* at 921-22 (quotation omitted).

The officer testified that, as the truck in the lane next to Camadaa made a complete stop, he could see Camadaa’s vehicle’s wheels from underneath the truck and that they did not come to a complete stop. Further, the truck and Camadaa’s vehicle then completed their turns simultaneously, which also indicates that Camadaa did not stop before entering the intersection because he would not have had time to make a complete stop and turn at the same time as the truck, given that Camadaa’s vehicle was farther back from the intersection as both vehicles approached it. This supports at least one inference of criminal activity—that Camadaa did not stop at his stop sign. *See Klamar*, 823 N.W.2d at 693. Thus, the officer’s testimony supports that the traffic stop was not based on a mere hunch, whim, or idle curiosity, but was based on specific and articulable facts that warranted an investigatory stop.⁴ *See Taylor*, 965 N.W.2d at 757; *Pike*, 551 N.W.2d at 921-22.

⁴ Because we conclude that the officer had reasonable, articulable suspicion to stop Camadaa based on the officer’s observation of his approaching and passing through the

Accordingly, we conclude that the district court did not err by denying the motion to suppress.

Affirmed.

intersection, we need not address Camadaa's claim that the district court erred when it considered observations of Camadaa's driving conduct subsequent to his passing through the intersection, which observations were made by the officer only after reviewing his vehicle's dash-camera footage at some point after he initiated the traffic stop.