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Prosecutor's Office Releases Findings of Fatal Police-Involved Shooting in Hamilton Township

In compliance with the New Jersey Attorney General's Law Enforcement Directive regarding uniform statewide procedures and best practices for conducting police use-of-force investigations, the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office is releasing this public statement regarding a fatal police-involved shooting in Hamilton.

Acting Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri determined the undisputed facts in this case indicate that the use of deadly force was legally justified and the presentation of the matter to the grand jury is not required.

The New Jersey Office of the Attorney General reviewed the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office investigation and agreed with the conclusion that the use of deadly force was legally justified and that a grand jury presentation was not required because no material facts were in dispute.

Factual findings of the investigation

On April 1, 2015, at approximately 5:20 p.m., the Hamilton Township Police Division received a 911 call reporting a stabbing in progress at a house on Nottingham Lane. Officers 1 and 2 responded. Upon their arrival, the officers encountered a female victim outside of the residence who had sustained visible injuries. The officers proceeded inside the residence and encountered the suspect, Shawn Clyde, stabbing a second male victim. Both officers yelled verbal commands for Clyde to drop the knife, but he ignored the officers' commands. As the suspect raised his arm to stab the male victim again, both officers fired one shot at Clyde. The suspect then fell on top of the male victim. The victims were both transported to Capital Health Regional Medical Center for treatment.

The female victim told members of the Mercer County Homicide Task Force that she was very scared of the suspect and concerned for the officers during their encounter with him. She further related that, approximately two weeks before the incident, Clyde began acting out, crying a lot, laughing inappropriately and having time periods of blank stares. The female victim also stated that the suspect had stopped taking his medication for schizophrenia.

The female victim stated that when she arrived home on April 1, 2015, her husband told her that Clyde had been crying. When they went into the kitchen, Clyde was saying "yes, yes, yes." Then he became silent, picked up a knife from the table and began stabbing the male victim. The female victim said that Clyde did not say anything as he continued to stab and slash the male victim. When the female victim attempted to stop Clyde, he turned the knife on her, stabbing her twice. She was able to call 911.

The male victim could not be interviewed because he was transferred to Deborah Heart and Lung Hospital after suffering a heart attack during the assault. As a result, his memory was not clear. The only thing the male victim recalled was being struck from behind by the suspect with something sharp.

Statements were taken from a neighbor and several Hamilton police officers who all related that they heard the officers say "drop the knife" before the gunshots were heard. The female victim also stated she heard the officers yelling "drop the knife" and then heard what she believed to be a gunshot. The 911 recording captured the officers yelling "drop the knife" many times followed by a noise consistent with a gunshot.

A statement was taken from Officer 2, who indicated that he was in the parking lot of the Colonial Fire Company speaking with Officer 1 when they heard the radio call of a stabbing in progress and that the suspect was still on the scene. Officer 2 followed Officer 1 to the scene, which is across the street from the firehouse.

As they arrived at the house on Nottingham Lane, Officer 2 heard a female yell "over here" and then saw the female victim with blood on her face and clothing. Officer 2 asked the victim where the suspect was and if the suspect was still armed. She pointed to the apartment and said the suspect was still in possession of the knife. Officer 2 drew his weapon and, upon entering the apartment, saw Clyde stabbing the male victim, who was bleeding profusely. Officer 2 approached and ordered the suspect to drop the knife. He was approximately 13 feet from the suspect. After ordering Clyde to drop the knife numerous times, Officer 2 stated that Clyde gave no response and continued to stab the male victim. Officer 2 stated that Officer 1 was to his left and was also yelling for the suspect to drop the knife. At one point, Clyde stopped stabbing the victim, looked back at the officers with a cold stare, said nothing and returned to stabbing the victim. Officer 2 then said to Officer 1, "We are going to have to do this." Officer 2 waited for Clyde to raise the knife again, he fired one shot and Officer 1 immediately fired a shot. At that point, Clyde stopped stabbing the victim.

Officer 1's statement was consistent with the statement of Officer 2. Officer 1 stated the he was in fear for the victim's life as well as his own life and that of Officer 2.

Shawn Clyde died as a result of his injuries on April 15, 2015.

The undisputed facts of this matter reveal that the officers were acting to protect themselves and others, and used deadly force pursuant to a reasonable belief of immediate deadly force being used on the male victim.

This entire matter has been reviewed by Acting Prosecutor Onofri. The MCPO complied with all portions of the Attorney General's Law Enforcement Directive regarding uniform statewide procedures and best practices for conducting police use-of-force investigations.

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