

Vt. Police Shoot, Kill Man on I-89

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FULL TEXT

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Williston, Vt. —Vermont State Police said the man shot and killed by police Sunday afternoon on Interstate 89 was pointing a gun to his own head and walking toward the officers, refusing their orders to put down the firearm. Trooper Christopher Brown and Richmond Police Cpl. Richard Greenough were identified on Monday as the law enforcement officers who fired a total of 12 shots.

Benjamin Gregware, 42, of Sheldon, who was described by police as suicidal and who had told a trooper earlier that he wanted to “end it,” was hit by three of the shots, in the head, torso and shoulder, according to Maj. Glenn Hall, head of the state police’s criminal division.

It was the third fatal shooting involving Vermont State Police in the past six months. State Police Director Col. Matthew Birmingham said on Monday the agency is contracting with an outside consultant to review its policies and procedures in such cases.

“Certainly, there is great cause for concern when you have multiple officer-involved shootings in a short period of time,” Birmingham told reporters at a press conference on Monday at the state police barracks in Williston.

“One fatal shooting is too many in my opinion. These are very challenging, complicated and tragic events,” Birmingham said. “As the director, I don’t want any fatal shootings to happen, but that’s not realistic.”

Birmingham said the decision to order the review does not “insinuate” the agency has done anything wrong, but is to ensure police are following best practices.

Brown was involved in all three of the fatal shootings in the past six months. His involvement in the first two, in Poultney in September and Montpelier last month, was as a member of the police tactical team.

Brown, who joined the state police in 2012, also was involved in a non-fatal shooting in Fayston in 2015.

In the Poultney and Fayston shootings Brown was cleared by prosecutors of any wrongdoing. The Montpelier shooting remains under review by the Vermont Attorney General’s Office and the Washington County State’s Attorney Office.

The Bolton shooting will be reviewed by the Vermont Attorney General’s Office and the Chittenden County State’s Attorney’s Office.

Birmingham said on Monday that in accordance with a new process Brown has been placed on paid administrative leave and will not return to duty until a legal review of the shooting in Bolton is complete, a process that could take several months.

“I worry about Trooper Brown and the impact that this is having on him,” Birmingham said. “These individual incidents are looked at independently of each other, not collectively, because lethal force is a justification point that occurs in a split second of time.”

In past cases, state police policy had allowed troopers involved in shootings to return to duty after at least three days on paid administrative leave.

“This decision is not an indication of any wrongdoing by Trooper Brown, but merely a change in the way the state police will now manage our response to officer-involved shootings as it relates to the health and well-being of our members,” Birmingham said

Brown was taken off the tactical team two weeks ago. Birmingham said on Monday he could not comment on the

decision to take Brown off the team, calling it a personnel matter.

Birmingham said on Monday that cameras in the Brown and Greenough's cruisers recorded the traffic stop, and that Greenough also was wearing a body camera.

CREDIT: By Alan J Keays

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