

# Personnel files detail the careers of four deputies involved in shooting

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## FULL TEXT

The personnel files of four Greenville County deputies involved in the fatal shooting of a mentally-unstable man show mostly positive remarks from supervisors and few criticisms, according to documents obtained by The Greenville News.

The deputies, including one who was previously involved in another deadly shooting, were placed on paid administrative leave in March immediately following the fatal shooting of 35-year-old Jermaine Massey. The Sheriff's Office said he charged at deputies with a knife behind his 3rd Avenue home in the Poe Mill community. The deputies were Master Deputy Wes Kilgore, Deputy Chris Bell, Deputy Mark Dulude and Deputy Jake Lancaster. Lancaster did not fire his weapon but was on scene during the March 19 ordeal, authorities have said.

The News requested their personnel files after interim Sheriff Johnny Mack Brown released their names May 3. Massey's family and activists wanted the Sheriff's Office to release the names sooner because of public interest and to see what, if any, red flags may have indicated a lack of training or history of violence involving the deputies. Previous requests for the names had been denied under now suspended Sheriff Will Lewis.

Three of the four deputies involved in the Massey shooting had been with the agency for less than a year and a half. They were all still employed by the Sheriff's Office as of Friday.

The four deputies each took the S.C. Criminal Justice Academy's basic training and in-service training that includes classes on mental health and domestic violence, although none of the men had taken Crisis Intervention Team training provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The CIT training is considered the best mental health training currently available, NAMI Greenville executive director Ken Dority has said.

The Sheriff's Office declined to comment on the backgrounds of the deputies and declined to say whether the deputies have since taken NAMI's training in the wake of the shooting. The deputies were reinstated on April 3. A State Law Enforcement Division investigation into the shooting is ongoing.

"To remain consistent with all officer-involved shootings and in an effort to protect the integrity of the ongoing investigation, it would be inappropriate to comment prior to the conclusion of SLED and the 13th Circuit's investigations," Sheriff's Office spokesman Ryan Flood said in a statement.

Deputy Charles Jake Lancaster

Lancaster, who the Sheriff's Office hired in November 2016, has been involved in two deputy-involved shootings, according to documents in his personnel file.

In 2017, he was among multiple deputies who responded to a report of a domestic situation involving a man with a gun chasing a woman on White Horse Road in Berea.

Ramiro Bravo Ramirez, 34, died July 14, 2017, after exchanging gunfire with deputies. Investigators determined Ramirez died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, though he was found with at least a dozen gunshot wounds. Lancaster noticed Ramirez shooting at deputies, and Lancaster fired 10 shots after he arrived on scene, according to documents obtained by The News.

Ramirez had been shooting at his girlfriend, Candy Esther Rosario, 25, as she ran away from him, investigators said. The two had been arguing at an apartment earlier that day, according to the investigation. By the time deputies arrived, Ramirez and Rosario were lying down next to each other. Some witnesses reported seeing

Ramirez hit Rosario with a pistol and shoot her before shooting himself in the head.

In one deputy's post-shooting interview, he said Rosario appeared to be moving her body while deputies were firing at Ramirez, according to SLED investigative files. The SLED report states that Rosario was found with two gunshot wounds, one in the side of her head, the other in her buttocks.

The bullet fragments taken from Rosario's head wound were never matched to a specific gun, according to the investigative files.

The damaged bullet found in her left buttock could not be matched to a specific firearm but was consistent with a .45 caliber pistol, according to ballistics testing. Ramirez had a 9 mm pistol while several deputies, including Lancaster, had been using .45-caliber pistols, according to the investigative files.

Lancaster was placed on leave after the shooting, which is standard procedure for deputies after an officer-involved shooting. State authorities interviewed him four days later, and he was reinstated to full duty July 25, 2017.

The SLED investigation was later completed, and the deputies were cleared in that case.

In Lancaster's firearms training, he scored a 70 percent in pistol training and an 80 percent in shotgun training, records show.

In his latest evaluation, Lancaster scored a 102 out of 125. He scored four out of five for most categories, including decision-making, interviews, policy conformance, crisis action and dependability. He scored a five out of five for accountability and equipment maintenance.

Interviewer notes from his hiring process state he was an "excellent candidate," that he "demonstrates problem-solving abilities" and that he "maintains composure through deadly force" based on mock scenarios presented to him.

Lancaster has only one citizen complaint in his file.

A woman complained that Lancaster told a man to break into her shed to retrieve his belongings after being called there for a dispute. The woman said she had invited the man to stay at her home after he was kicked out from his own home. Lancaster was exonerated, and another deputy followed up with the woman and fixed the damage to her shed.

Deputy Christopher Bell

Bell has been with the Sheriff's Office since May 30, 2017, records show.

From his most recent evaluation June 4, Bell scored a 100 out of 125, scoring a four out of five in 25 categories. That most recent evaluation summary states he should continue to expose himself to as many calls as possible, adding that he makes good decisions in high-stress situations.

Records state he earned his associate's degree in criminal justice before coming to the Sheriff's Office. He also had been a licensed Realtor, a store manager at Walgreens and a personal trainer at an Anderson YMCA.

On his application to the Sheriff's Office, he said he shadowed the Greenville County coroner in 2003, had an internship with the Anderson County Forensics Unit in 2006 and was put on the dean's list and president's list while in college. He stated he had extensive experience in dealing with the public and diffusing upset customers. Comments from his interviewers during the application process included "common sense answers," "dealt with the stress of the interview well," "good communication skills" and "very pleasant demeanor."

Deputy Mark Dulude

Dulude has been with the Sheriff's Office since January, starting roughly two months before the Massey shooting. He worked as a lance corporal with the S.C. Highway Patrol from July 2011 to December 2017, records show. He also had worked for Santee Cooper Security in Monks Corner from 2008 to 2010 and Walgreens in 2007. He earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

The Sheriff's Office decided before he was hired to waive his board interview process since he was already a law enforcement officer in South Carolina.

In Dulude's most recent evaluation, he earned a 75 out of 125, earning three out of five scores on each category. Each category, ranging from accountability to appearance and officer safety, is graded on a scale of one to five.

He completed a shortened field training period with the Sheriff's Office given his prior experience with the Highway Patrol.

Master Deputy Wesley Kilgore

The most senior deputy out of the four involved in the Massey shooting, Kilgore has been with the Sheriff's Office since Oct. 1, 2012.

He was previously a deputy sheriff for the McIntosh County Sheriff's Office in Georgia from 2007 to 2012, records show.

He was in the U.S. Army from 2001 to 2003 when he was honorably discharged. He suffered a back injury from a parachute accident.

His career specialties have included work involving meth labs, child predators, narcotics, community policing and emergency response.

In November 2016, he was transferred from the narcotics unit to community patrol. He scored a 106 out of 125 in a 2016 evaluation. That evaluation stated his strength was in his ability to reach others.

He scored a 122 out of 125 in his most recent evaluation and has been a member of the Greenville County Emergency Management Team and the Technical Rescue and Recovery Team.

Records show Kilgore was promoted to master deputy with the community patrol division in April, six days after he was put back on duty from the Poe Mill shooting.

Kilgore was thanked by a resident in June 2017 for leading a community meeting in Berea stemming from a rash in property thefts and burglaries.

Kilgore was one of a team of deputies thanked by a resident for their work in raiding a meth house in 2015.

He received more praise in 2013 from a woman who wrote to the Sheriff's Office saying, "Just wanted to thank (Kilgore) for helping me and being real nice."

A positive counseling report letter from 2015 states that Kilgore was traveling to church when he discovered a man on the side of the road who appeared to be unconscious. He began performing CPR until paramedics arrived.

He was later among a handful of deputies recognized in a letter for the Sheriff's Office's work to investigate sex trafficking in Greenville County.

But in March 2016, Kilgore was suspended without pay for eight hours for losing his radio. Former Sheriff Steve Loftis pointed out in a letter that the lost radio on March 30, 2016, marked the second time Kilgore had misplaced county-issued equipment. He misplaced his assault rifle on a set of outside bleachers at the Sheriff's Office's training center, according to a written reprimand letter dated Dec. 29, 2015. Several days passed without Kilgore reporting it missing and that it was misplaced.

"We discussed the importance of knowing the location and condition of all issued firearms and especially that of a fully automatic firearm," the letter reads.

The Jermaine Massey shooting

Massey had called 911 that day to ask for help during a mental health crisis. He told a dispatcher he had bipolar disorder. When deputies responded, they found him in the backyard with a knife, authorities have said.

Sheriff Lewis said on scene the night of the shooting that Massey's family members were in the home and removed from the scene shortly after deputies arrived since they were considered "potential hostage victims."

After about seven to 10 minutes of negotiations, Lewis said Massey came at them with the knife, at which point the deputies opened fire.

While on scene, deputies could be heard on the 911 call saying "don't do it" and "drop the knife" during interactions with him. Massey's family members have said repeating "drop the knife" doesn't constitute effective negotiations. In the initial 911 call, Massey said he was "fixing to do something stupid" and made threatening remarks toward his family.

The SLED investigation into the shooting is ongoing, and investigative documents are not yet available.

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Greenville County Sheriff's Department officers investigate the scene of an officer-involved shooting near Poe Mill

on March 19.

photos by JOSH MORGAN/Staff

U.A. Thompson speaks about Jermaine Massey's shooting death at a news conference March 24.

CREDIT: Daniel J. Gross

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