

Attorney General's Shooting Response Team Investigates Fatal Shooting Involving New Jersey State Police in Warren County

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FULL TEXT

New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal issued the following news release:

The Attorney General's Shooting Response Team is conducting an investigation into the circumstances of an officer-involved shooting late last night in Hardwick Township (Warren County), N.J., involving the New Jersey State Police. The subject, who was armed with a hunting knife, was fatally shot by a state trooper.

The shooting occurred shortly after 9 p.m. at a home on Sunset Lake Road in Hardwick. According to the preliminary investigation, the subject, Stephen Cogelia, 32, of Hardwick, had been asked by his father to leave the residence and had made threats that he would kill his father and other occupants of the home. The father went to State Police at Hope Station to report the threats and obtain a temporary restraining order (TRO) against the son. While the father was still at the State Police barracks, a relative called to report that Stephen Cogelia had returned to the home and was making additional threats.

Five troopers responded to the home to investigate the threats. When the troopers entered the home, they heard Stephen Cogelia threatening violence against them. Troopers went to the second floor of the home and opened the door of a bedroom. Inside the room, they encountered Stephen Cogelia armed with a hunting knife. During the encounter, one trooper fired his service weapon, striking and killing Cogelia. Cogelia was pronounced dead at the scene. No troopers were injured.

The investigation is ongoing and no further information is being released at this time.

In New Jersey, all investigations of police deadly force incidents are governed by the Attorney General's Independent Prosecutor Directive, issued in 2006 and strengthened in 2015, which establishes strict procedures for conducting such investigations. It requires the Attorney General to review all deadly force investigations, and in some cases conduct them as well. In this case, the investigation is being conducted directly by the Attorney General's Shooting Response Team. The directive further provides that unless the undisputed facts indicate the use of force was justified under the law, the circumstances of the incident must ultimately be presented to a grand jury, composed of 23 civilians, for its independent review.

The Independent Prosecutor Directive is posted on the Attorney General's website at the following link:

www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/2006-5_SRT_OIS.pdf

Further information about how officer-involved shootings are investigated in New Jersey under the directive is found at this link:

www.nj.gov/oag/independent-prosecutor

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