

Old Town police officer returns to work after fatal shooting of New Hampshire man

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FULL TEXT

An Old Town police officer has returned to work after he engaged in an armed confrontation on Nov. 29 that left a New Hampshire man dead.

Authorities still have not released many details about the death of 37-year-old Adrian Bunker, who was killed early that morning after Officer Joseph Decoteau stopped his pickup truck on Stillwater Avenue.

[New Hampshire man killed after an armed confrontation with Old Town police]

The Old Town officer was placed on paid administrative leave, which is standard protocol after officer-involved shootings in Maine.

Almost a month later, on Dec. 22, Decoteau resumed his normal patrols, Chief Scott Wilcox of the Old Town Police Department said this week.

So far, authorities have not specifically said that Decoteau shot Bunker.

The shooting remains under investigation by the Maine Office of the Attorney General and the Old Town Police Department. Such investigations are also routine after officer-involved shootings.

[How Maine police shootings are investigated]

Wilcox declined to speak about the shooting this week, referring many questions to the Office of the Attorney General.

That office's investigation is meant to determine whether police were legally justified in using lethal force. The findings have always been the same: In more than 100 reviews of police use of deadly force since 1990, the office has never found that an officer should face criminal charges.

Brian MacMaster, the office's chief of investigations, declined to comment on the Old Town shooting this week.

"We do not comment on pending investigations," he wrote in an email.

The Old Town Police Department has also convened a local panel to review the shooting, but Wilcox has yet to receive its findings, the chief said Tuesday.

That panel includes a chief and a firearms instructor from other police agencies, a member of the Maine State Police and an Old Town resident.

"That panel has met, but I don't have the report," Wilcox said, adding that he does not know when to expect it.

Police said that Decoteau go into the fatal confrontation with Bunker after stopping his Silverado pickup truck around 3:20 a.m. Nov. 29. They still have not given a reason for the traffic stop.

Decoteau first joined the Old Town department in December 2017.

Relatives of Bunker have not responded to requests for an interview.

Though he lived in Merrimack, New Hampshire, at the time of his death, he was raised in Cambridge, Maine, a Somerset County town that's about 30 miles north of Newport, according to his obituary.

In the obituary, Bunker's family described him as "an extremely intelligent person who was able to work proficiently at anything he put his mind to, as a mechanic, a carpenter, an electrician, and even a cook. He was amazing with numbers and if you told him your social security number once 20 years ago he was able to recite it."

The obituary also said that Bunker "loved his family" and had a brother who died earlier in 2018.

"He will be remembered by his infectious laugh, his sense of humor, and his willingness to always help anyone who

needed him," the obituary reads. "Anyone Adrian met would instantly like him and become his friend."

Credit: Charles Eichacker BDN Staff

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