

Sheriff Chitwood defends Volusia deputy's decision to shoot man who grabbed Taser

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FULL TEXT

A Volusia County deputy who shot to death a 29-year-old Seville man Friday night while responding to a domestic-violence call likely saved a woman's life, Sheriff Mike Chitwood said.

A worker at a domestic abuse center called the Volusia County Sheriff's Office saying Emmanuel Alquisiras was beating the mother of his children. Deputy Brandon Watson responded, and Chitwood defended his decision to fire at Alquisiras after he grabbed Watson's Taser, ignoring multiple warnings to surrender.

"If he loses his firearm, he's dead," Chitwood said during a press briefing Saturday, referring to the deputy.

Watson's nearest back-ups were 20 minutes away in downtown DeLand, Chitwood said, and if the deputy had left her there, the 24-year-old woman would have been "a homicide victim."

"In my heart of hearts, I think as this thing unfolds, you're going to see a woman who was basically held captive by this guy," Chitwood said.

The sheriff's office doesn't have the details of the conversations between the domestic abuse center and the woman yet, but it appears she was trying to leave the home, Chitwood said.

When Watson arrived at about 7:30 at the northwest Volusia home, Alquisiras and another man were sitting at the top of the stairs leading to the apartment, body camera footage released Saturday shows. A woman came out of the apartment while Watson was speaking to the men. Alquisiras grabbed her and Watson feared he would throw her down the stairs, according to the sheriff's report, so he used the Taser on Alquisiras.

As Alquisiras sat on the stairs, he repeatedly ignored Watson's orders to put his hands behind his back and said "shoot me!" He then grabbed the Taser.

Watson fired five shots at Alquisiras, striking him four times, Chitwood said.

Four children were at the home at the time. Their wails can be heard on the body camera footage after Watson fired the fatal shots.

Alquisiras was arrested on domestic battery charges in 2008 and trespassed from his children's day care center earlier this year, Chitwood said.

The woman who called the domestic abuse hotline said when Alquisiras uses cocaine, "he tends to beat her and be extremely violent," Chitwood said. It's unclear whether Alquisiras was using cocaine Friday night.

Watson, who has been a Volusia deputy since May 2015, is on administrative leave while the Florida Department of Law Enforcement reviews the shooting.

Chitwood said he couldn't say whether Watson had used his Taser before, but "by all accounts, he's an outstanding deputy."

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Credit: Annie Martin

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