

State patrol: Deputy justified in fatal Joplin - Joplin Globe, The (MO) - March 2, 2018

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A Missouri State Highway Patrol investigation has determined that a Jasper County deputy's fatal shooting of a Joplin man on Jan. 2 was justified.

Sheriff Randee Kaiser said a state patrol report returned this week found that Deputy Jason Hutchins acted in a lawful manner when he shot and killed 66-year-old **Louis C. Miller** at 901 N. Landreth Ave. Hutchins was responding to a call for backup help from two other deputies who were serving civil court documents on Miller at the time.

The process servers called for backup assistance when Miller confronted them inside his residence armed with a large knife.

The sheriff said Miller's roommates, Mindi Hitt, 39, and Orlander Edwards, 45, who had been letting Miller reside with them, sought and obtained an ex parte order earlier that day in response to Miller purportedly having become increasingly confrontational with them in the days preceding the shooting. Joplin police were told by Hitt that Miller had threatened to kill Edwards during an argument with her while Edwards was at work.

"After those threats were made, they wanted him to move out," Kaiser said.

The process servers met the couple at a residence next door and obtained their permission to enter the house and serve the papers on Miller.

Kaiser said the court order was a "move-out" ex parte, meaning Miller needed to leave the residence. As the two deputies entered through the front door and announced their presence, Miller emerged from the back of the house displaying the knife, the sheriff said. The deputies called for assistance and tried to calm him down.

"They instructed him several times to drop the knife or put it down," Kaiser said.

In the meantime, Hutchins, a detective with the sheriff's office who happened to be in Joplin at the time, and a fourth deputy arrived on the scene in response to the call for backup. The sheriff said Hutchins' decision to draw his service weapon was "an appropriate response" when confronted by someone armed with a lethal weapon.

Kaiser said Hutchins fired a single round, striking Miller in the chest when Miller charged at him inside the house. He was pronounced dead at a Joplin hospital a short time later.

The sheriff said he was uncertain how many of the other deputies had their guns drawn when the shooting took place. But no other shots were fired and no deputies were injured, he said.

The sheriff's office did not publicly identify Hutchins as the officer who shot Miller until Friday and provided few details about the shooting while the state patrol investigation was in progress. Kaiser said he did not know why the investigation took two months to complete.

Return to duty

Deputy Jason Hutchins was placed on administrative leave following the Jan. 2 shooting of Louis Miller. Hutchins returned to active duty a few days later.

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