

Attorney General finds trooper shooting was justified

Freking, Kevin . AP English Language News (includes AP 50 State Report) ; New York [New York]02 Jan 2019.

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FULL TEXT

EPPING, N.H. (AP) - The Office of the Attorney General concluded Wednesday that a New Hampshire state trooper was justified in shooting at a drunk driver last year after the man fired first.

During a traffic stop Sept. 29, Walter Welch Jr. shot at Trooper Kevin Dobson, who returned fire. Dobson fired four times on Welch's truck, hitting him twice. But Welch also shot himself about the same time, and the medical examiner could not say which bullet killed him.

In a report released Wednesday, the attorney general's office found that Dobson was justified in firing at Welch, 44, of Fremont.

Dobson was responding to a call about an erratic driver, when he approached Welch's pickup truck, which was stopped on Route 101 in Epping. During the encounter, the attorney general's office said Welch acknowledged to Dobson that he had been drinking heavily.

As part of its investigation, the attorney general's office released audio of several 911 calls. In one, a driver behind Welch described him as a drunk driver who was "white line bouncing like crazy" and almost hit a toll booth. Another driver called him erratic and feared he would cause an accident.

A toxicology report later determined that Welch had a blood alcohol concentration of .234, nearly three times the state's legal limit.

After talking briefly with Dobson, Welch raised a gun and shot in the direction of the trooper. Dobson retreated to the back of the truck and ordered Welch repeatedly to drop his weapon, according to the report. He refused and, instead, appeared to be getting out of his truck. Dobson then fired four shots into the back of the truck just as Welch shot himself.

"Based upon the evidence and considering all of the circumstances as they were presented to Trooper Dobson, it was reasonable for Trooper Dobson to believe that he faced an imminent threat of deadly force from Walter Welch, Jr.," the attorney general's report said.

Information from: Foster's Daily Democrat, <http://www.fosters.com>

Credit: By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

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