

## **DA: Police-involved fatal shooting in Manheim - LNP (Lancaster, PA) - May 23, 2018**

May 23, 2018 | LNP (Lancaster, PA) | LINDSEY BLEST and JEFF HAWKES | Staff Writers

A Manheim Township police officer was justified in fatally shooting a suicidal man who confronted police with a shotgun earlier this month, Lancaster County's district attorney said this afternoon.

**John Simson**, 65, of East Petersburg, arrived at the Manheim Township police station May 8 with a shotgun and shot himself in the face before an officer fired a fatal, single shot, District Attorney Craig Stedman said.

Simson did not comply with police commands, Stedman said before showing video footage of the incident, which happened outside the station on Municipal Drive.

"There's not a question in my mind the officer was justified in what he did," Stedman said during a news conference at the Lancaster County Courthouse.

"It's (Simson's) fault," Stedman said.

The district attorney said Simson wrote a suicide note to his family before going to the police station.

At the press conference, Stedman showed video footage of the confrontation and shooting.

The video shows Simson park across the street at the Manheim Township Ambulance Association, get out of his truck and take a shot without aim, possibly into the air.

Simson then walked behind the station, where he pointed the shotgun at Officer Ryan Snyder, who was in a cruiser, Stedman said. Simson walked around to the entrance of the police station while Snyder radioed for help.

At that point, Stedman said, Snyder would have been justified in using deadly force. Other people were in the vicinity and in danger.

"It's an extremely dangerous situation," Stedman said.

After pointing his shotgun at the police cruiser, Simson walked to the police station entrance and turned the gun on himself, shooting himself in the face, the video shows.

Warning: This livestream contains graphic content.

Simson fell, but was still alive. After about 20 seconds, he sat up, twice, and reached for his shotgun the second time. He pointed it toward the corner of the building, around which Officer

Snyder was approaching, Stedman said.

That's when Officer Calvin Steidler arrived in his cruiser, got out and told Simson to drop the weapon. When Simson did not comply, Steidler shot Simson, Stedman said.

Steidler fired a single, fatal shot from about 30 yards away, Stedman said.

"One shot. It's a very, very accurate shot," Stedman said.

Stedman called Simson's act "a cowardly way out for him."

"He tried to kill himself. He left it up to the police, obviously, to finish it," Stedman said.

Simson had been charged a few days prior with sexually abusing a young girl. He was arraigned on the charges and posted bail.

Steidler was on paid, administrative leave after the shooting, but will return to duty.

Releasing an officer's name in a police-involved shooting is handled on a case-by-case basis, Stedman said.

"We talked to the officer involved and made sure that he was comfortable with it. Had he not been comfortable with releasing his name, we would not have done it," he said.

"He didn't go to work that day thinking he was going to take someone's life," Stedman said of Steidler. "The time he had to act, he did with professionalism. He's got to deal with this, too."

All content © 2018 LNP Media Group, Inc. and may not be republished without permission.