

# Critics wonder why cop shot through windshield

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## FULL TEXT

During the pursuit of an armed robbery suspect Tuesday in Portland, one Louisville Metro Police officer took both hands off the wheel of his moving car, grabbed his gun and shot through his windshield.

It looked like something out of an action movie and caught the attention of cops and critics alike. Is shooting at a suspect through a windshield an appropriate police tactic?

Nicolai Jilek, an LMPD officer since 2007 and the president of Louisville's police union, said "you may not see it often" but that shooting through a windshield can be a useful tactic in a life or death situation.

"When you're in your car you've got your seatbelt on, equipment on and you have a steering wheel," Jilek said. "If you can, you want to return fire from the car as quick as possible."

Jilek said that while shooting through the windshield is a rarity, it is a situation that has been discussed in recent police training in Louisville.

"They're trying to train us to shoot through our windshield if we need to," Jilek said. "If you feel threatened and you're in immediate danger, it can be effective. I think there has been some tactical observations and research that shows officers are concerned with getting out of their cars safely in those situations."

But others, such as former Madison, Wisconsin, Police Chief David Couper said the move seemed "reckless."

Couper, a vocal advocate for law enforcement reform, said there are lots of repercussions to think about when shooting through a windshield.

"I've never heard of that before," Couper said. "I was led to believe that the bullet's trajectory could change or be deflected when going through a windshield. There's also the element of shattered glass too. It sounds bizarre."

Couper said the use of force obviously depends on the situation, but he criticized the practicality of firing through a patrol car's windshield. He pointed out more simple measures such as rolling down a side window or taking cover behind the vehicle before lining up a shot.

"It sounds hazardous, but I imagine the police force would defend the decision," Couper said. "There are two things you need to ask: Is this consistent with training or not? And was this a last-ditch method to save your life or the life of another person?"

The officers shot and killed Demonjhea Jordan, 21, of Jeffersonville, Indiana, after he robbed a Metro PCS in the Portland neighborhood on Tuesday.

Lt. Aaron Crowell of the department's public integrity unit said police think Jordan also fired his weapon, citing "multiple sources of information" that led them to that conclusion.

He declined to say what the sources were, how many shots were fired or who fired first. It's not clear in the body camera footage when or if the suspect fired his weapon, but a gun is visible between his legs when he is lying on the ground wounded.

Jilek said the risks of a bullet going off course or shattered glass causing injuries are insignificant in a life or death situation.

James Clarkson, the owner of the residential building near where the suspect was shot, said his tenants estimated they heard between 15 and 20 shots. Damage was done to the apartment building he owns, including shattered windows and broken doors. The four people inside were, thankfully, unharmed, Clarkson said.

The officers involved in Jordan's death, including the officer who fired from behind the windshield, have been

placed on routine reassignment pending the outcome of the department's internal investigation.  
Thomas Novelly: 502-582-4465; [tnovelly@courierjournal.com](mailto:tnovelly@courierjournal.com); Twitter: @TomNovelly. Support strong local journalism by subscribing today: [www.courier-journal.com/tomn](http://www.courier-journal.com/tomn).

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