

Police: Man pointing gun at his own head killed by officers

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

The first of the three recent state police shootings involving Brown came Sept. 1 in Poultney when he was among five troopers who shot and killed a man they were trying to arrest on a domestic assault charge who turned out to be armed with two BB guns. Last month, Brown was one of eight state troopers and a Montpelier city police officer who shot and killed a bank robbery suspect on the athletic field of Montpelier High School. The number of police shootings in Vermont has gone up this decade, said Major Glenn Hall, the head of the state police criminal division.

FULL TEXT

WILLISTON, Vt. (AP) - A distraught man who was pointing a pistol at his own head was shot by police as he walked toward two officers next to a busy interstate and refused repeated commands to drop the weapon, state police said Monday.

The man died at a hospital shortly after the Sunday shooting in the breakdown lane of Interstate 89 in Bolton, said state police Col. Matthew Birmingham.

Benjamin Gregware, 42, of Sheldon, did not point his weapon at police before he was shot three times, Birmingham said. State police Trooper Christopher Brown and an officer from the nearby Richmond Police Department fired 12 shots total at him.

It was the third fatal shooting involving Brown in the last six months. He also was involved in a nonfatal shooting several years ago, Birmingham said.

Brown has been placed on administrative leave for the duration of the investigation into the latest shooting, a process that could take several months.

"This decision is not an indication of any wrongdoing by Trooper Brown, but merely a change in the way the state police will now manage our response to officer involved shootings as it relates to the health and well-being of our members," Birmingham said during a Monday news conference.

A representative of the Vermont Troopers Association did not immediately return an email seeking comment on Brown's behalf.

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Last month, Brown was one of eight state troopers and a Montpelier city police officer who shot and killed a bank robbery suspect on the athletic field of Montpelier High School.

Birmingham said Brown was removed from the state police tactical services unit about two weeks ago but would not say why.

The number of police shootings in Vermont has gone up this decade, said Major Glenn Hall, the head of the state police criminal division. Between 2000 and 2010 there were 22 police shootings. Since 2010 there have been approximately 25.

Police could not say for sure why the number had gone up.

Birmingham said one fatal shooting is too many.

"These are very challenging, complicated and so as the director I don't want any fatal shootings to happen, but that's not realistic," he said. "In this world, they happen and we do everything we can to mitigate and de-escalate these situations."

Less than an hour before the Bolton shooting, Gregware's ex-wife called police to say her husband was distraught and had purchased ammunition. A different trooper spoke to Gregware, who said he was going to continue driving south until he ran out of gas and then "end it."

When Gregware's car was spotted, Brown and Richmond Cpl. Richard Greenough stopped the vehicle. Gregware got out of his car and walked toward the officers, ignoring repeated demands that he drop the weapon, a machine pistol commonly known as a Mac-10.

Gregware did not fire at officers. The investigation is trying to determine if Gregware's weapon went off as he fell to the ground.

Greenough has also been placed on leave, said Richmond Police Chief Alan Buck.

In addition, state police are looking at their procedures and training to see if changes need to be made, Birmingham said.

This story has been corrected to it was Gregware's ex-wife who called police, not his wife.

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