

South Carolina officers cleared in death of man - Associated Press State Wire: South Carolina (SC) - June 14, 2018

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GREENVILLE, S.C. (AP) — Three police officers in South Carolina were justified shooting a man who called 911 reporting he was having a mental crisis because he lunged at one of them with the knife, a prosecutor said Thursday.

The family of **Jermaine Massey** has said the fatal shooting shows Greenville County deputies need more training on how to deal with people suffering mental problems and need to solve issues with less violence.

The deputies showed restraint trying to talk to Massey as he stalked around the backyard of his Greenville home thrusting the knife up and down, Solicitor Walt Wilkins said.

But five shocks from a Taser had "literally zero effect," Wilkins said.

And when Massey charged at a deputy with the knife, Wilkins said three of the four officers fired a total of 11 shots, all captured on body camera video released after Wilkins' news conference.

"The last thing anybody wants to happen is for somebody to get hurt, either an officer or an individual member of our community," Wilkins said.

Massey, 35, called 911 to report that he was bipolar and having thoughts about harming his family on March 19. The body camera video shows Massey sitting on his back steps as officers arrive but quickly standing up while holding the large knife.

Massey had a blood-alcohol level of 0.15 percent, nearly twice the legal limit to drive and traces of midazolam, a prescription sedative often used before medical procedures, Wilkins said.

Massey's family and friends said they aren't happy with the prosecutor's decision.

"We are still going to fight to change this judicial system. Almost never do cops get convicted when they act in error, which gives them a lot of confidence to keep doing what they're doing," U.A. Thompson, a community activist speaking on behalf of Massey's family, told The Greenville News.

Interim Greenville County Sheriff Johnny Mack Brown said he is trying to get training for as many deputies as he can over the next several months.

"We understand there is a lot of mental illness out there and we want to be able to handle it," Brown said.

Wilkins said he showed the family the body camera video of the shooting within days because he

wanted them to understand what the officers were dealing with and to answer their questions the best he could.

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