

State of Connecticut
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Report Concerning the
Use of Deadly Force against Aaron Freeman
by the West Haven Police Department and the
Waterbury Police Department
on January 29, 2025

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Inspector General

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Acknowledgements

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New Haven Police Department

Waterbury Police Department

State Police Central District Major Crime Squad

The New Haven State's Attorney's Office

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Connecticut Forensic Laboratory—Firearms Unit

United States Drug Enforcement Agency

INTRODUCTION

On January 29, 2025, at approximately 5:36 a.m. and 6:20 a.m., respectively, Detective Martin Scanlon of the Waterbury Police Department,¹ and Sergeant Joseph Riehl of the West Haven Police Department,² discharged their department-issued firearms at Aaron Freeman,³ who died as a result of being struck by gunfire. As required by statute,⁴ the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated this incident. The results of that investigation are summarized in this report.

More specifically, on January 29, 2025, at approximately 5:30 a.m., law enforcement officers assigned to a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Task Force, including police officers from the Waterbury, West Haven, and New Haven police departments, arrived at 719 Grand Avenue, Apartment #105, New Haven to execute a search and seizure warrant for the premises and an arrest warrant for Aaron Freeman on narcotics charges. Apartment #105 is a two-story townhouse style apartment. The officers assembled outside, knocked on the apartment door, and announced their presence. After hearing no response, the officers entered the apartment by using a master key provided by the landlord. Inside, they encountered an adult female standing unclothed near a bedroom door adjacent to the kitchen area. Officers subsequently observed Aaron Freeman standing inside the bedroom near the partially opened door. After being ordered to show his hands, Aaron Freeman opened fire on the officers. One bullet struck West Haven Officer Robert Rappa in the calf, who then sought cover in a nearby bathroom. Martin Scanlon, a Waterbury detective, took cover in the stairwell leading to the apartment's second floor. Officer Scanlon and Freeman exchanged gunfire.

After a few minutes, Officer Rappa attempted to escape from the bathroom so that he could obtain medical treatment for his gunshot wound. To do so, however, he needed to pass through Freeman's line of fire from the bedroom. As Officer Rappa sprinted past the door,

¹Detective Scanlon is a white male, who, at the time of the incident, was forty-one years old and had been a Waterbury Police officer for eighteen years. He had no prior disciplinary history.

²Sergeant Riehl is a white male, who, at the time of the incident, was thirty-one years old and had been a West Haven Police Officer for eleven years. He had no prior relevant disciplinary history.

³Aaron Freeman was a thirty-five-year-old black male.

⁴General Statutes §51-277a(a)(1) provides: "Whenever a peace officer, in the performance of such officer's duties, uses physical force upon another person and such person dies as a result thereof or uses deadly force, as defined in section 53a-3, upon another person, the Division of Criminal Justice shall cause an investigation to be made and the Inspector General shall have the responsibility of determining whether the use of force by the peace officer was justifiable under section 53a-22."

Freeman fired at least one additional round at him, but Rappa was not struck. A few moments after Rappa escaped the bathroom, Scanlon fired four additional rounds at Freeman.

DEA Task Force officers then awaited the arrival of the West Haven Police Department Special Response Team (SRT). The SRT, including West Haven Police Sergeant Joseph Riehl, were equipped with bullet-proof safety shields and several of them entered the apartment. As Sergeant Riehl proceeded into the living room of the apartment and moved toward Freeman's bedroom, he was struck in the upper leg by a bullet fired by Freeman through the bedroom wall. Sergeant Riehl returned fire, immediately retreated, and then was assisted out of the apartment by other officers who rendered him medical aid.

Thereafter, the SRT attempted to communicate with Freeman to negotiate an end to the stand-off, but he failed to respond. Tear gas was deployed into the bedroom and a drone with an attached camera was flown into Freeman's bedroom. Video from the drone revealed that Freeman appeared to be deceased. Officers then entered the bedroom and medical personnel from the SRT declared him dead at 7:52 a.m. The scene was then secured.

After reviewing the facts revealed by my office's investigation of this incident, I have determined that both Detective Scanlon and Sergeant Riehl honestly and sincerely believed that Freeman had attempted to kill or inflict serious physical harm on them and/or other officers at the scene. They also sincerely and honestly believed that it was necessary to use deadly physical force to protect themselves and their fellow officers from serious physical injury or death. Under the totality of the circumstances, the officers' beliefs were reasonable. Accordingly, their use of deadly physical force was legally justified.

INVESTIGATION

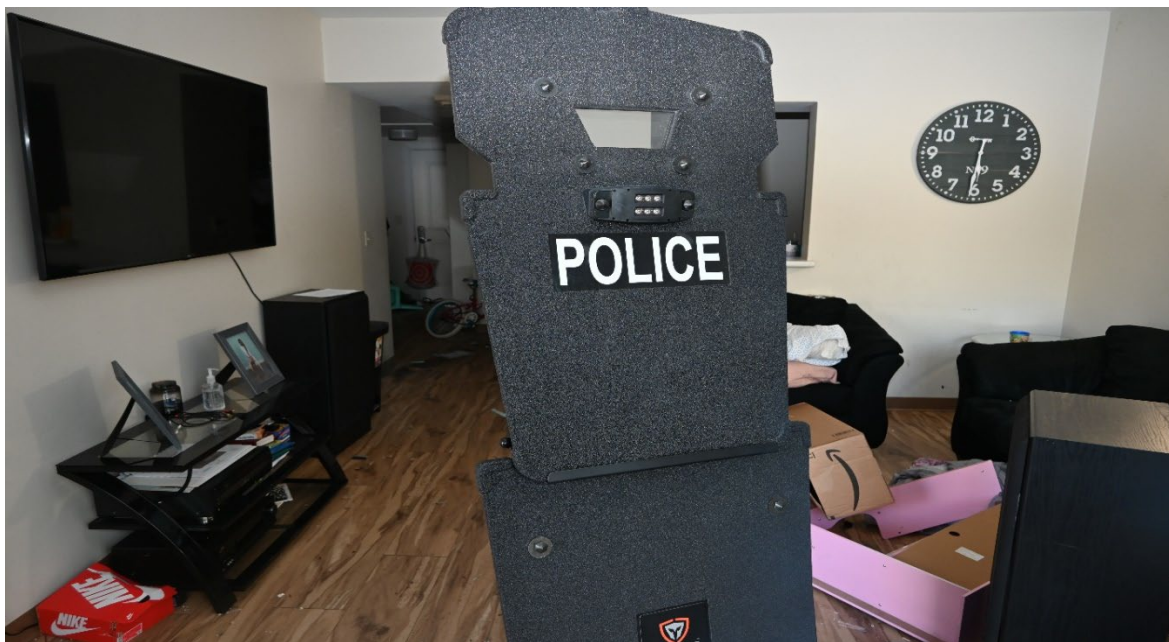
Scene

The scene was secured by the New Haven Police Department and subsequently processed by the State Police Central District Major Crime Squad (CDMCS). The scene is located in and around Apartment #105 at 719 Grand Avenue in New Haven, CT.



[Apartment #105, 719 Grand Avenue]

The apartment can be accessed directly from the outside through a rear door into the apartment's living room. The apartment's kitchen is located at the far end of the living room. The first floor also contains a bedroom, a bathroom, stairwell access to the second floor, and a foyer that leads to a front door, which provides access to a common hallway inside the apartment building.

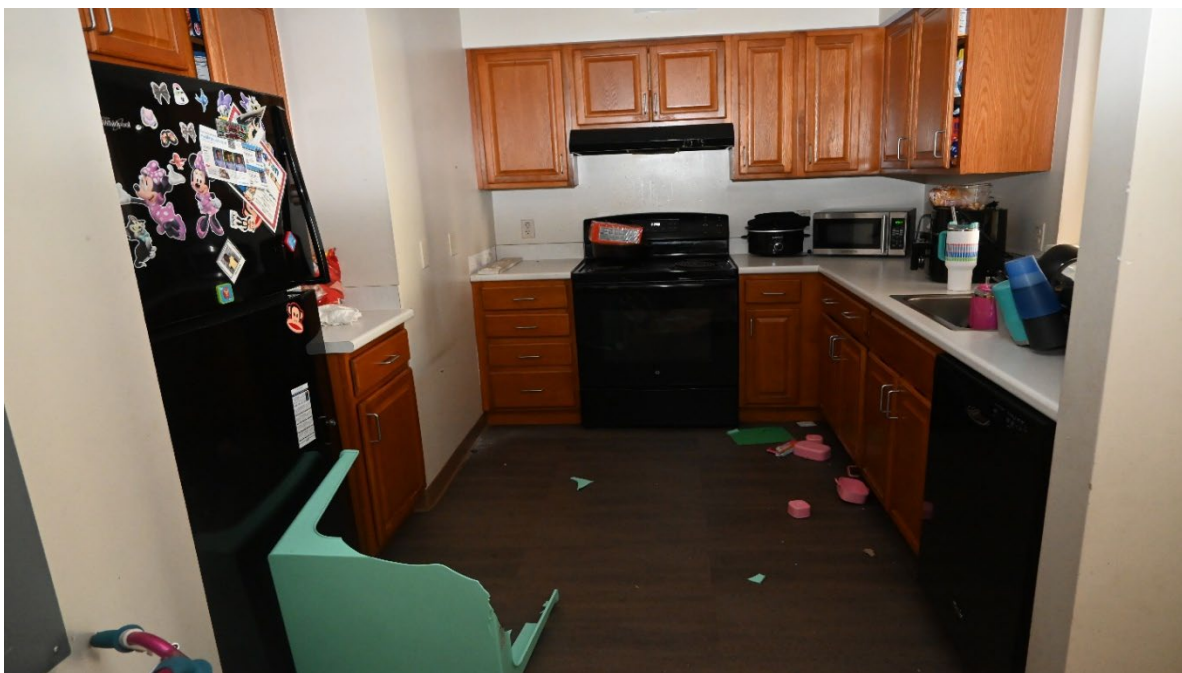


[Living room with bullet-proof shield]

More specifically, a short hallway from the living room permits access to the kitchen on the right and then takes a jag to the left. The sole first-floor bedroom can then be accessed immediately to the left. The hallway ends at a front door that provides access to the apartment building's common hallway. A Target bag can be seen hanging from the handle of the front door.



[Hallway from living room to kitchen and first floor bedroom]



[Kitchen]

The bathroom door is further down the hallway on the left side.



[Hallway and entrance to first-floor bathroom]



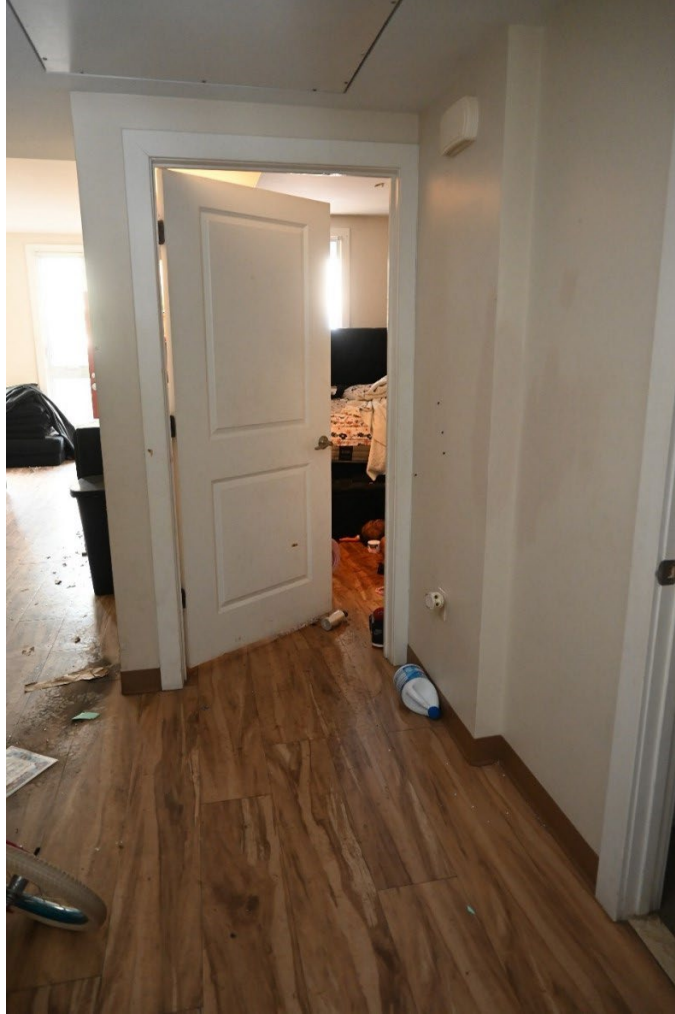
[First floor bathroom]

The stairwell to the second floor is on the right at the end of the hallway, just past a small utility closet. There is also a second hallway closet next to the bathroom door.

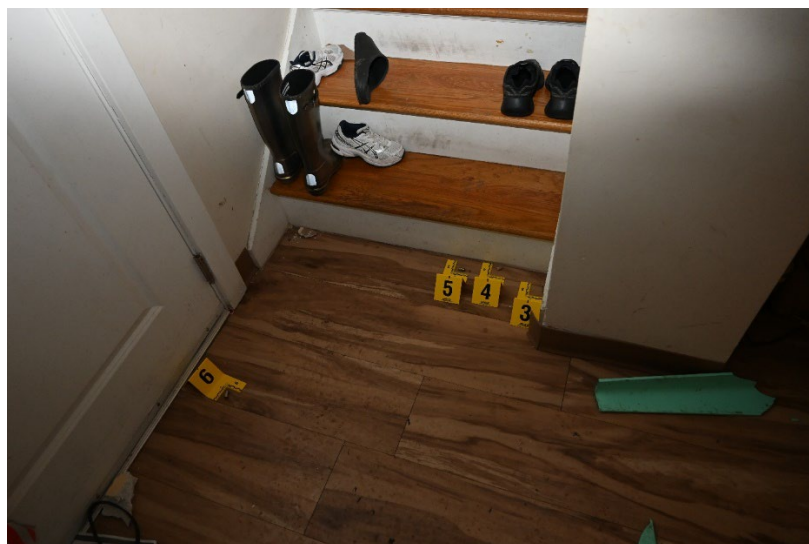


[Staircase and first-floor closet]

The second floor of the apartment contains two additional bedrooms, a laundry room, and a bathroom. No items of evidentiary value were located on the second floor.



[View from bottom of stairwell into Freeman's bedroom]



[Spent shell casings and a projectile (Evidence marker #4)]



[Spent shell casings near stairwell and bathroom door]



[Spent shell casings in bathroom]



[Spent shell casing in bathroom]

The bedroom occupied by Freeman on the first floor contained numerous items of evidentiary value. I have not included in this report photographs of a number of these items because many of the photographs contain highly graphic and disturbing images of Freeman's body and a substantial amount of blood. When the crime scene was processed, Freeman's body was located on the floor near the foot of the bed and close to the bedroom door. A firearm was located on the bed just above where Freeman lay. Numerous shell casings were strewn on the floor. Additionally, two rounds of live ammunition were found in the bedroom.



[Glock found near Freeman's body]



[Live round found on bedroom floor]



[Spent shell casing in Freeman's bedroom]



[Spent shell casing located under Freeman's bed]

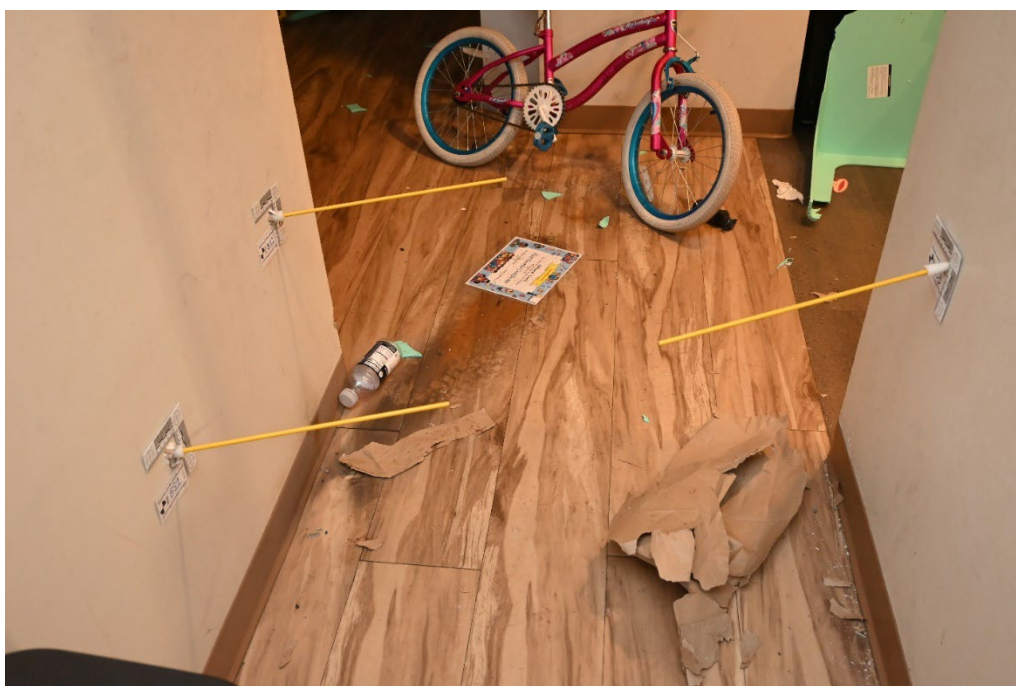


[Spent shell casings on floor of closet across from the bottom of the stairwell]



[Spent shell casing on bedroom floor]

Twenty-one bullet strikes in the apartment were located, photographed and documented with evidence markers. They were located in various places on the first floor of the apartment, including but not limited to, on the ceiling and walls of the kitchen, the door to the refrigerator, the wall separating the living room from Freeman's bedroom, the wall of the hallway separating the hallway from the kitchen, the inside wall of Freeman's bedroom, the doorjamb and door of Freeman's bedroom, and the exterior wall of the apartment just outside Freeman's bedroom. Two representative photographs of the bullet strikes are immediately below.



[Bullet strikes with trajectory rods]



[Bullet strikes on Freeman's bedroom door]

Statements

Officer Robert Rappa

Officer Robert Rappa filed a written sworn report on March 17, 2025. It states in relevant part: "I have been employed by the West Haven Police Department since July 11, 2012. I currently hold the rank of Officer and am assigned to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) New Haven District Office's (NHDO) Federal Drug Task Force as well as the West Haven Police Department's Street Crime Unit.

"On Wednesday, January 29, 2025, I was working extra duty for the purpose of executing a State search and seizure warrant at 719 Grand Avenue, Apartment 105, New Haven, Connecticut and to attempt to take Aaron Freeman, . . . a resident of this apartment and the target of this investigation into custody on a felony State arrest warrant. On this date I was wearing a Department approved outer carrier ballistic vest[,] which has patches on the front and rear that read 'POLICE' and also has my name, badge number, and an embroidered West Haven Police Badge on the front, all of which clearly identify me as a Police Officer.

"Upon arrival at the apartment complex NHDO members and Street Crime Unit members assembled by the rear outside entrance door to Apartment 105, which is adjacent to the parking lot. At approximately 0536 hours, I loudly knocked and announced Police with a search warrant and to come to the door multiple times. After knocking for a reasonable amount of time without receiving an answer, fearing evidence that could prove to be crucial in the prosecution of this case may be destroyed, and for the safety of the Officers involved, entry was gained into the apartment using a key which had previously been provided to Officers by the property management company.

"While entering and once inside the apartment, I continued to verbally identify myself as a Police Officer and immediately observed a naked black female inside the residence towards the front of the apartment. I ordered the female to come out towards me and provided her with a clothing item that was laying on the couch to cover herself with. The female took the item but did not obey my commands and instead walked backwards away from me towards the front of the apartment. At this time Officer Brandon Butler yelled that he saw someone else come out of a room and then retreat back into the room. I then walked towards the now covered female and pulled her arm to direct her back towards the rear of the apartment where other Officers were. I then attempted to locate the individual Officer Butler had just observed.

"As I looked to my left, I saw a black male, who appeared to be Freeman, standing partially behind a door. Freeman appeared to be naked and was staring directly at me with his eyes wide open while I yelled for him to show me his hands. Freeman did not comply, and I pushed the door open in an attempt to get a better view of him and make sure he was not holding a weapon and to also see inside the room. As I pushed the door open, I immediately

heard a gunshot and felt pain in my lower left leg as I observed Freeman backing up into the dark room away from me. I immediately took cover to my right entering a bathroom which was the next room over from the bedroom Freeman was in. I then heard what I believed to be Task Force Officer Scanlon firing multiple rounds towards where Freeman had been.

“Shortly after this I heard a single gunshot which sounded like it came from the room Freeman was in and seemed directed towards my position in the bathroom. Fearing he would fire through the wall I crouched down. I then notified other Officers that I was hit and that the target was still in the room he was initially observed in. I proceeded to place a tourniquet that was on my vest on to my left leg as Officer Scanlon was giving verbal commands for Freeman to show himself and come out with his hands up. During this time there was a male tenant upstairs yelling loudly. From my position in the bathroom, I was unable to see into the bedroom without exposing myself.

“After a short time being inside the bathroom, I notified Officer Scanlon that I was going to attempt to exit back towards the rear of the apartment. I then ran back towards the rear of the apartment and as I crossed past the open bedroom door heard a gunshot which sounded as if it had come from the bedroom Freeman was in. I then exited the apartment and was transported to Yale New Haven Hospital by Task Force Officers”

Detective Martin Scanlon

Detective Martin Scanlon filed a written sworn report on March 3, 2025. It states in relevant part: “[I am] a regular sworn member of the Waterbury Police Department [with] over 19 years of police training and experience. . . . I have conducted numerous investigations which have led to the issuance of search warrants as well as the seizure of illegal contraband and the convictions of those involved. I am currently assigned to The Waterbury Police Vice and Intelligence Unit and The Drug Enforcement Agency New Haven District Office (DEA NHDO) as a Task Force Officer (TFO). . . .

“A recent narcotics investigation by the West Haven Police Department and TFO Robert Rappa resulted in an Arrest Warrant being issued for Aaron Freeman, . . . and a Search and Seizure Warrant being issued for his residence/vehicle, located at 719 Grand Avenue Apt 105 New Haven, CT 06511.

“On 1/29/2025 I, along with members of the DEA NHDO, and West Haven Police Department gathered for the purpose of executing the warrants. All officers were wearing tactical bullet proof vests with ‘Police’ clearly visible. We approached the rear door of 719 Grand Avenue Apartment 105. Officer Robert Rappa loudly knocked on the door and announced police with a search warrant several times and waited a reasonable amount of time before making entry. A male immediately recognized by me as Aaron Freeman was observed opening the blinds to what was later determined to be his bedroom. I gave clear commands for him to

'come to the door' as Officer Rappa entered the apartment. I entered the apartment behind Officer Rappa, and we were met in the kitchen area by Aaron Freeman's Girlfriend. The female was not wearing clothes, so Officer Rappa handed her a coat to cover herself up. She was instructed to move away from the kitchen area, and she did. Officer Rappa made contact with Aaron Freeman at the threshold of[] the first floor bedroom. Aaron Freeman stepped back into the bedroom and another West Haven Officer ordered him to come out. I announced, 'Aaron come on out, hands up.' Officer Rappa who was still directly in front of this writer told Freeman to show his hands as Freeman was observed partially behind the first-floor bedroom door. Freeman was not complying with our verbal commands, and I heard him say, 'what's the problem?'

"I observed Freeman's left hand empty, but his right hand was blocked by the bedroom door. I heard one gunshot and turned to see Freeman still in the bedroom with a gun in his right hand as the bedroom door was now open. I heard Officer Rappa yell in pain then seek cover in a small bathroom directly next to the bedroom. It should be noted that I was still behind Officer Rappa and in the direction of where Aaron Freeman fired the shot. While I was seeking cover towards a stairwell that led to second floor bedrooms, I observed Freeman standing in the bedroom pointing a gun towards Officer Rappa while Officer Rappa was fleeing for cover into said bathroom, in what appeared to be an attempt to continue shooting at Officer Rappa. Freeman then raised his right hand pointing his gun towards me. I had my department issued pistol in my right hand aimed at Freeman while trying to maintain cover behind a stairwell wall. I fired three times at Freeman who appeared to have fallen back further into the bedroom from the shots. I retreated up the stairs for safety and also to check for other people in the home and reassess the situation. I contacted an unknown male, and a juvenile female said to be the male's granddaughter. While at the top of the stairwell I heard another gunshot coming from the same area where Freeman had previously fired his weapon. I went back down the stairs and maintained cover while checking on Officer Rappa who verbally confirmed he was shot. I continued to give verbal commands for Aaron Freeman to come out of the room with his hands up, but he continuously ignored said commands and maintained silence. Officer Rappa who needed medical assistance for a gunshot wound to his leg was able to run out from his cover position and exit the same way we entered the apartment. I maintained cover on Officer Rappa and observed that as soon as he passed the doorway to the bedroom Aaron Freeman was in, a shot was fired. When the shot was fired, I observed a muzzle flash from Freeman's position. I verbally clarified that it was Aaron Freeman shooting at Officer Rappa again. I observed a sneaker move into the doorway just below where the muzzle flash was observed. This indicated that Freeman appeared to also be standing in a position of cover and was lying in wait for any officer to come into his line of site as indicated from his last shot at Officer Rappa. I warned other officers that were in the kitchen area to not cross the threshold leading to the area I was in. At this time, I observed Freeman stick a gun out from his position of cover (right side of the

bedroom door) and I fired four shots at Freeman. This writer, and other officers on scene continuously made attempts to have Freeman acknowledge us but he still did not comply. Attempting to deescalate, I told Freeman we wanted to get him medical assistance if it was needed. I continued to verbally de-escalate the situation but Freeman was still not replying to any of my or other Officers' verbal commands or requests.

"I maintained verbal contact with the unidentified adult male and juvenile female to help ensure their safety. After approximately 40 minutes on scene West Haven's Special Response Team (SRT) arrived. While SRT was planning their plan to make contact with Freeman I maintained my position of cover on the stairwell. When members of SRT attempted to make contact with Aaron Freeman he fired at them striking an officer. An apparent exchange of gunfire occurred. SRT maintained cover on the bedroom and as part of their plan, this writer, the adult male, and juvenile female were removed from the residence through a second floor window."

Sergeant Joseph Riehl

Sergeant Joseph Riehl filed a written sworn report on February 13, 2025. It states in relevant part: "On January 29, 2025, I was working as a West Haven Police Special Response Team ("SRT") operator and assigned to assist the West Haven Police Street Crime Unit during the execution of a search and seizure warrant at 719 Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT. I, along with other SRT members, arrived at the location at approximately 0614 hours.

"Upon arrival we were briefed by Officer Brandon Butler of the West Haven Police Street Crime Unit. We were advised that the Street Crime Unit, with assistance from the New Haven DEA Task Force, had made entry into Unit 105 at 719 Grand Avenue. During the entry, . . . [o]fficers were fired upon by an occupant of the residence who was reported to be in the first-floor bedroom and that one . . . [o]fficer, Officer Robert Rappa, was struck in the leg by a bullet. We were advised that TFO Rappa had been safely removed from the apartment, but that TFO Martin Scanlon was trapped inside somewhere between the bedroom and the rear exit of the residence. Officer Butler also provided a basic layout of the interior of the apartment.

"After the briefing, other SRT Officers and I entered the residence through the rear door which led into a living room area. I was given a ballistic shield and began to proceed through the living room towards the first-floor bedroom with other SRT Officers behind me. As we moved forward, we called out to TFO Scanlon to establish communication with him, and he advised us that the suspect was still located in the first-floor bedroom.

"As I approached the end of the living room wall, I began to turn toward my left attempting to clear the threshold to the bedroom door. As I did so, I was able to peer into the room through the window of my ballistic shield and saw the legs of an individual lying on the floor on their right side. I also saw what appeared to be blood on the floor and on the

individual's legs. I then saw the legs of the individual move slightly and instantaneously heard the sound of a gunshot coming from the bedroom. I felt a burning sensation in my right thigh and realized I had been shot. I returned fire and immediately retreated backwards. I do not recall how many rounds I discharged and I did not hear the sound of any more gunshots being discharged after I fired.

"I was then assisted out of the residence by other SRT members and transported to Yale New Haven Hospital by American Medical Response for treatment and evaluation."

Digital Evidence

(GRAPHIC WARNING: The following videos contain violent and graphic images. Viewer discretion is advised.)

The incident was captured on the body-worn cameras (BWC) of various officers who initially responded to the scene. The most relevant videos are summarized and linked to below.

Officer Robert Rappa's BWC video

Officer Rappa's BWC video shows his approach to the exterior door of Apartment #105 with other members of the Task Force. He placed a key into the lock of the door and then proceeded to knock and announce in a loud voice: "Police with a search warrant, police with a search warrant, come to the door." He then unlocked the door, pushed it open and entered the apartment with his firearm unholstered and raised in front of him.

An unclothed woman can be seen standing in the hallway just outside the kitchen and the door to Freeman's bedroom. Contrary to Rappa's command, she moved back toward the bedroom. She then began to comply by moving closer to Rappa and he handed her an article of clothing with which she could cover herself. She accepted the item of clothing but again moved backwards in the direction of the bedroom. Rappa followed her, grabbed her by the wrist and tried to lead her back into the living room.

At this point, Freeman can be seen standing naked just inside the door frame of the bedroom. The bedroom was dark, the door was partially open, but Freeman's right arm and hand were not visible. Freeman was ordered to show his hands by Rappa. Freeman did not comply. Rappa then proceeded to push open further the bedroom door with his left hand. As he did so, Freeman can be seen in a screen shot from the video set forth below holding a firearm in his right hand.



[Freeman holding firearm]

A single gunshot can then be heard. Rappa yelled out in apparent pain. He immediately sought cover in the adjacent bathroom just as additional gun shots are heard. He quickly reported to his fellow officers that he had been struck by gunfire. Through a small crack between the bathroom door and the door frame, another officer can be seen standing near the bottom of the stairwell, which was diagonally across the hallway. Rappa then inquired with other officers regarding whether the suspect had been hit.

Rappa began to apply a tourniquet to his injured leg. Another officer can be heard ordering Freeman to come out with his hands raised. The sound of officers trying to breach the front door to the apartment can be heard, but they were told by another officer to stop trying to do so. Freeman shouted at the officers to “get the fuck out” of the apartment.

Another officer climbed through a pass-through window from the living room into the kitchen. Rappa communicated with that officer about his plan to run out of the bathroom to safety. A few moments later, Rappa dashed out of the bathroom past the open door to Freeman’s bedroom. Just as he made it to the relative safety of the living room, an additional gunshot can be heard. Rappa then exited the apartment and was assisted by other officers as he moved away from the apartment building.

[To view Officer Rappa’s BWC video, click [here](#).]

Detective Martin Scanlon's BWC video

Officer Scanlon's video from his BWC shows that he entered the apartment just behind Officer Rappa. When Rappa approached Freeman, who was just inside the bedroom door, Scanlon stood to the right and rear of Rappa. After Freeman shot Rappa, Scanlon, with his weapon drawn, immediately sought cover in the stairway diagonally across from the bathroom. He then reached his right hand around the corner of the stairwell wall in the direction of Freeman's bedroom, and three gunshots can be heard.⁵

Scanlon then proceeded up the stairs and interacted with two individuals on the second floor.⁶ A loud noise can be heard from downstairs and Scanlon quickly proceeded back down the stairs and provided cover for Rappa who said he was trying to put on a tourniquet. He also issued commands to Freeman to surrender. Officers began to breach the front door to the apartment, but Scanlon commanded them to stop because they would be in the line of fire.

Next, Rappa dashed out of the bathroom and the sound of a gunshot can be heard immediately thereafter. Shortly thereafter, Scanlon indicated that he believed he knew Freeman's location in the bedroom. He then fired four shots at Freeman's suspected location.

For the next 35 minutes or so, Scanlon continued to train his firearm at the door to Freeman's bedroom while trying to communicate with him. Freeman, however, did not respond. At 6:20 a.m., Scanlon sought additional cover up the staircase and additional gunfire can be heard.⁷

At 6:30 a.m., the whirring sound of a drone can be heard. From the staircase, Scanlon continued to train his weapon towards the front door of the apartment. At approximately 6:43 a.m., Scanlon received orders to assist the evacuation of the two individuals on the second floor of the apartment through a second-floor window where other officers were waiting on a ledge.

[To view Officer Scanlon's BWC video, click [here](#) and [here](#).]

⁵ In his written statement, Scanlon stated that he fired three shots at Freeman just after he found cover in the stairwell. Because his right hand was obscured by the stairwell wall, his firearm is also not visible in the video when he fired three shots. Additionally, in his statement, he indicated that he could see Freeman pointing a gun at him as he sought cover. Because his BWC was facing away from the door, it did not capture Freeman at that moment.

⁶ The investigation later revealed that these individuals lived in the apartment and were related to the woman who police encountered when they first entered the apartment.

⁷ Based on other evidence, this moment appears to be when Sergeant Riehl and Freeman exchanged gunfire.

Sergeant Joseph Riehl's BWC video

Sergeant Riehl's BWC video shows that he arrived at the scene with other members of the SRT at 6:14 a.m. Riehl and other officers received a briefing on the layout of the apartment and the location of Freeman. After a discussion of tactics, including the use of bullet-proof shields, Riehl and other SRT officers entered the living room through the rear apartment door. Riehl held a rifle when he first entered the apartment but then appeared to shoulder the rifle when he was handed a bullet-proof shield.

At 6:20 a.m., Riehl is standing along the wall of the living room near the entrance to the kitchen. His BWC is mostly blocked by the bullet-proof shield, which was held in his left hand. His duty pistol and his right hand are not visible in the video.

Seconds later, a warning yell can be heard, followed immediately by the sound of gunfire. At this time, Riehl was standing near the entrance to the kitchen and at the end of wall that separates the living room from Freeman's bedroom. Riehl exclaimed "I am hit, I am hit." He then began to move backwards, while dropping the shield. He then raised his arms in what appears to be a shooting position, but the video does not show whether he was holding his service weapon. He then fell towards the floor while bracing himself with his left hand.

Finally, Riehl exited the apartment, and officers began to render him medical assistance. He reported that he had been shot in his right leg.

[To view video from Sergeant Riehl's BWC, click [here](#).]

Medical Records and Autopsy Report

Aaron Freeman was pronounced dead at the scene at 7:25 a.m. On January 30, 2025, an autopsy was performed on Freeman by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The autopsy revealed that Freeman had suffered a total of seven gunshot wounds, including to his chest, abdomen, and both legs. The cause of death was determined to be gunshot wounds to his torso and extremities. Bullets and bullet fragments were removed from his body and sent to the State Forensic Lab for testing and analysis.

Toxicology tests were performed postmortem on Freeman's blood, urine and vitreous fluid. The tests were negative for the presence of alcohol or illegal substances. The test were positive for tetrahydrocannabinol (THC metabolites, the main active ingredient in cannabis).

Firearm and Ballistic Evidence

Firearm Recovered Next to Aaron Freeman

A black and purple .40 caliber Glock 27 semi-automatic pistol (Serial #SMZ641) was located on the bed in the apartment's downstairs bedroom close to Freeman's body.⁸ The firearm was stovepiped⁹ with a .40 caliber S&W, manufactured by Federal, live round. Two live rounds of the same caliber and manufacturer were recovered from Freeman's bedroom floor and on top of his bed.

The Glock had an empty, extended magazine (nineteen round capacity), mounted Streamlight TLR-6 light, XGrip and a Glock switch.¹⁰ The firearm was covered in a blood-like substance. It was photographed, documented (Evidence marker #19), seized, and sent to the firearm unit of the State's Forensic Laboratory for further testing and analysis.

Upon forensic examination and test-firing, the firearm was operable but only in semi-automatic mode because the Glock switch device was missing a part and therefore was not functioning properly. Expended shell casings and projectiles were obtained by test-firing the Glock so that they could be compared to expended shell casings collected from the scene and to projectiles collected from the scene and at Freeman's autopsy.

Five spent shell casings recovered from various locations inside Freeman's bedroom were determined to have originated from Freeman's firearm. (Evidence markers #22, 25, 36, 36, and 39). Comparison of the projectile obtained from test-firing Freeman's firearm with projectiles recovered at the scene were inconclusive or excluded the recovered projectiles as having been fired from Freeman's gun.

⁸ This firearm has been potentially linked to an unsolved 2024 homicide in New Haven but Freeman is not a suspect with respect to that matter.

⁹ When an expended shell casing is not properly ejected from the firearm after it is fired, the weapon is sometimes referred to as "stovepiped." The same term is often used to describe a live round that is jammed in the firearm's slide. The term is derived from the appearance of the weapon because the jammed expended shell casing or live round often sits upright in the ejection port like a chimney or "stovepipe." A semi-automatic firearm that is stovepiped cannot be fired unless and until the spent shell casing or the live round is cleared from the weapon because it prevents the live round or an additional round from entering the weapon's firing chamber.

¹⁰ A Glock switch, sometimes referred to as a "full-auto sear," is a mechanical device that can be attached to a semi-automatic pistol, which typically fires one round per trigger pull, to a fully automatic weapon, which continuously fires rounds with one pull and hold of the trigger. A Glock switch is illegal under federal law. 18 U.S.C. §922(o); 27 C.F.R. 479.105.

Officers' Firearms

The firearms of both officers who discharged their handguns were seized and submitted for forensic examination.

Detective Scanlon was armed with a FN model 509 9mm Luger semi-automatic pistol (Serial #GKS0282020). The firearm had a SIG optic sight and a Streamlight flashlight. It was seized from him along with a seventeen round capacity magazine. There were ten rounds in the magazine, and one round was found in the chamber of the pistol. All were 9mm Luger rounds manufactured by Speer. The round count supports a conclusion that Detective Scanlon fired seven rounds during the incident.

Scanlon's firearm was operable when test fired. Expended shell casings obtained by test-firing the weapon were microscopically compared to shell casings recovered from the scene of the incident. This testing determined that expended shell casings recovered from an area around the bottom of the stairwell at the scene (Evidence marker ##s 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 45, and 46) originated from Scanlon's firearm. In sum, this evidence strongly supports the conclusion that Scanlon fired seven rounds.

A projectile (bullet) also was obtained by test-firing Scanlon's firearm. Projectiles and bullet fragments seized from the scene and from Freeman's body during his autopsy were microscopically compared to the projectile obtained from the test-fire of the gun. Projectiles found at the bottom of the stairwell (Evidence marker #4 and #52), lodged in the floor next to Freeman's body in the bedroom (Evidence marker #15), laying on top of Freeman's bed (Evidence marker #29), and recovered from Freeman's right hip during the autopsy were determined to have been fired from Detective Scanlon's weapon. Comparison of other projectiles and fragments to the test-fired projectile from Scanlon's weapon were inconclusive or excluded as having been fired by his pistol.

Sergeant Riehl was armed with a Glock 45 semi-automatic pistol (Serial #BYHZ690) with a Streamlight TLR-1 flashlight, and Steiner Optic sight, and a Glock seventeen round capacity magazine. There were thirteen live rounds in the magazine and one live round in the chamber when the firearm was seized. Two additional seventeen-round capacity magazines were also seized from his duty belt. Both magazines contained seventeen live rounds. All rounds were 9mm Luger and manufactured by Winchester. The total round count suggests that Sergeant Riehl fired four rounds.

Riehl's firearm was operable when test fired. Expended shell casings obtained by test-firing the weapon were microscopically compared to shell casings recovered from the floor of the hallway and bathroom at the scene. This testing determined that four shell casings recovered from the scene (Evidence marker ##s 9, 10, 12, and 44) originated from Riehl's firearm. In sum, this evidence strongly supports the conclusion that Riehl fired four rounds.

A projectile from Riehl's firearm was obtained by test-firing the pistol. Projectiles and bullet fragments seized from the scene and from Freeman's body during his autopsy were microscopically compared to the projectile obtained from the test-fire of the weapon. Projectiles recovered from Freeman's thoracic spine and right shoulder were determined to have been fired from Sergeant Riehl's firearm. Comparison of other projectiles and fragments to the test-fired projectile from Riehl's weapon were inconclusive or excluded from having been fired by his pistol.

FINDINGS

Based on this investigation, I find the following material facts:

1. On January 29, 2025, law enforcement officers assigned to a DEA Task Force went to Apartment #105 at 719 Grand Avenue in New Haven to execute a search warrant for the premises and an arrest warrant for Aaron Freeman.
2. After knocking and announcing their presence at 5:36 a.m., they entered the apartment and encountered Freeman standing just inside a bedroom on the first floor, with the door partially closed. Officer Rappa of the West Haven Police Department ordered him to show his hands. Detective Martin Scanlon of the Waterbury Police Department, a member of the Task Force, also ordered him to come out of the bedroom with his hands up.
3. Freeman was armed with a Glock semi-automatic pistol.
4. Instead of complying with the officer, Freeman fired several rounds at Officer Robert Rappa of the West Haven Police Department. One bullet struck Rappa in the calf.
5. Rappa sought cover in a nearby bathroom. He did not fire any rounds during the incident.
6. Scanlon was standing next to Rappa when Freeman shot Rappa. Scanlon sought cover in a nearby stairwell and then fired three rounds at Freeman.
7. A few minutes later, Freeman fired at least one additional round at Rappa when he tried to escape the bathroom so that he could receive medical treatment for the gunshot wound to the calf.
8. After confirming with fellow officers that it had been Freeman who had just fired on Rappa, Scanlon saw Freeman extend a gun out through the doorway from a position of cover. Scanlon then fired an additional four rounds at Freeman.
9. At least one of the seven total rounds fired by Scanlon struck Freeman.
10. For the next thirty-five minutes or so, Task Force Members attempted to communicate with Freeman to persuade him to surrender peacefully. Freeman did not respond.

11. Because Officer Scanlon remained trapped inside the apartment, members of the West Haven SRT, including Sergeant Joseph Riehl, entered the apartment at 6:19 a.m. As Riehl and other officers approached Freeman's bedroom while holding bullet-proof shields, Freeman fired additional rounds at the officers through the wall.
12. One of the rounds fired by Freeman struck Riehl in the right thigh.
13. Riehl returned fired at Freeman with his duty pistol. At least one of these rounds struck Freeman.
14. After retreating to safety, members of the SRT attempted again to communicate with Freeman and to convince him to surrender with no additional violence. When Freeman did not respond, a drone was deployed into the apartment and Freeman's bedroom to ascertain his condition. Freeman appeared to be deceased.
15. Officers subsequently entered Freeman's bedroom and confirmed that he was deceased.
16. Freeman died of gunshot wounds to his torso and extremities.

LAW

The use of force by a police officer is governed by General Statutes §53a-22. The version of that statute in effect on January 29, 2025, in relevant part, provides:

(b) [A] peace officer . . . is justified in using physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he or she reasonably believes such use to be necessary to: (1) Effect an arrest or prevent the escape from custody of a person whom he or she reasonably believes to have committed an offense, unless he or she knows that the arrest or custody is unauthorized; or (2) defend himself or herself or a third person from the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

(c) (1) . . . a peace officer . . . is justified in using *deadly physical force* upon another person for the purposes specified in subsection (b) of this section only when his or her actions are objectively reasonable under the circumstances, and:

(A) He or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to defend himself or herself or a third person from the use or imminent use of deadly physical force; or

(B) He or she (i) has reasonably determined that there are no available reasonable alternatives to the use of deadly physical force, (ii) reasonably believes that the force employed creates no unreasonable risk of injury to a third party, and (iii) reasonably believes such force is necessary to (l) effect an arrest of a person whom he or she reasonably believes has committed or

attempted to commit a felony that involved the infliction of serious physical injury, and if, where feasible, he or she has given warning of his or her intent to use deadly force” (Emphasis added).

The statute further provides:

“For the purpose of evaluating whether the actions of a peace officer . . . are reasonable under subdivision (1) of this subsection, factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, whether (A) the person upon whom deadly force was used possessed or appeared to possess a deadly weapon, (B) the peace officer . . . engaged in reasonable de-escalation measures prior to using deadly physical force, and (C) any unreasonable conduct of the peace officer . . . led to an increased risk of an occurrence of the situation that precipitated the use of force.” §53a-22(c)(2).

Accordingly, a police officer is justified in using deadly physical force upon another person when the officer reasonably believes such force to be necessary to defend the officer or a third person from the use or imminent use of deadly physical force. “Deadly physical force” means “physical force that can be reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical injury.” General Statutes § 53a-3(5). “Serious physical injury” means “physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health or serious loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.” General Statutes §53a-3(4).

The reasonableness of a police officer’s belief under § 53a-22 is evaluated pursuant to a subjective-objective formulation. *State v. Smith*, 73 Conn. App. 173, 185, 807 A.2d 500, cert. denied 262 Conn. 923, 812 A.2d 865 (2002). Under this test, the first question is whether, on the basis of all of the evidence, the police officer in fact honestly believed that deadly force was necessary to defend himself/herself or a third person. *Id.* If it is determined that the police officer honestly believed that deadly force was necessary, the second part of the test asks whether the police officer’s honest belief was reasonable from the perspective of a reasonable police officer in the officer’s circumstances. *Id.* at 198.

The United States Supreme Court has explained this test as follows: “The reasonableness’ of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on scene rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. . . . [T]he calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance of the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second decisions—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation.” *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 396-97, 109 S. Ct. 1865, 104 L. Ed. 2d 443 (1989).

ANALYSIS

There is no dispute in this case that, by discharging their firearms at Aaron Freeman, Detective Scanlon and Sergeant Riehl both used deadly physical force against him. Accordingly, the critical inquiry in this case is whether each of the officer's use of deadly physical force was objectively reasonable and therefore legally justified under the totality of the circumstances.

Under Connecticut law as applicable here, a determination as to whether a police officer's use of deadly force was legally justified requires, in part, consideration of four questions:

1. Did the officer, as a matter of fact, actually – that is honestly and sincerely – believe that he/she or a third person was facing either the actual or imminent use of deadly force when the officer used deadly force?
2. Was that actual belief reasonable in the sense that a reasonable police officer in the officer's circumstances at the time of the officer's actions, viewing those circumstances from the officer's point of view, would have shared that belief?
3. Did the officer, as a matter of fact, actually – that is honestly and sincerely – believe that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend himself/herself or a third person from such threat?
4. Was that actual belief reasonable, in the sense that a reasonable police officer in the officer's circumstances at the time of the officer's actions, viewing those circumstances from the officer's point of view, would share the belief that deadly force was necessary?

Additionally, the reasonableness of the officer's conduct also turns on whether (1) the other person possessed a deadly weapon (or appeared to), (2) the officer attempted reasonable de-escalation measures, and (3) the situation was not precipitated by the officer's own conduct.

There can be no serious debate that both officers' use of deadly physical force was legally justified under this test. First, both officers honestly and subjectively believed that during the incident Freeman had used and would continue to use deadly physical force against themselves and/or their fellow officers. Both officers honestly believed that Freeman was armed with a firearm and in fact discharged it as they attempted to effectuate his arrest and serve the search warrant.

Second, both officers' belief that Freeman had used or was about to use again imminent deadly force against them or their fellow officers was objectively reasonable. Any reasonable police officer in the same circumstances would have shared that view because they experienced Freeman discharging a firearm at them and/or another officer. Both knew that Officer Rappa had already been shot in the calf.

Third, both officers honestly and subjectively believed that it was necessary to defend themselves or their fellow officers by using deadly physical force. At the time that they fired rounds at Freeman, they knew he had a firearm and that he already shot another officer.

Finally, I conclude that a reasonable police officer in the same circumstances confronting both officers, when viewing those circumstances from the officers' point of view, would share their belief that deadly physical force was required under the circumstances.


The officers' need to use deadly physical force was not precipitated by any of their individual actions. The Task Force officers had a general duty to attempt to serve a search warrant for the premises and arrest warrant for Freeman on felony charges. Indeed, there is nothing in the officers' specific conduct or tactics here, beyond the inherent risks related to the service of a search warrant and a felony arrest warrant, that precipitated the need to use deadly physical force. Moreover, Officer Rappa did not have an opportunity to utilize substantial de-escalation measures as he was immediately fired upon by Freeman. Finally, Task Force members spent a significant period of time attempting to convince Freeman to surrender before Sergeant Riehl and members of the SRT attempted to approach the bedroom at 6:20 a.m.

In the simplest terms, Freeman fired repeatedly at Task Force and SRT officers suddenly and without provocation. The necessity of the use of deadly physical force by Scanlon and Riehl arose from the violent and life-threatening conduct of Freeman. Fortunately, Officer Rappa and Sergeant Riehl have recovered from their injuries.

CONCLUSION

In sum, I conclude that the use of deadly physical force by Detective Scanlon and Sergeant Riehl was objectively reasonable in response to the use of deadly physical force used by Aaron Freeman in this incident. Accordingly, I find that their actions were legally justified. Accordingly, I and my office will take no further action with respect to this matter.

December 19, 2025



ELIOT D. PRESCOTT
INSPECTOR GENERAL