

State of Connecticut
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Report Concerning the
Use of Deadly Force by the Wallingford Police Department on October 16, 2023
Resulting in the Death of Donald Passmore

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Inspector General

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Acknowledgments

The Office of Inspector General acknowledges the assistance to this investigation provided by the following:

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Connecticut State Police Eastern District Major Crime Squad

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Scientific Services

Wallingford Police Department

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

New Haven Judicial District State's Attorney's Office

INTRODUCTION

On October 16, 2023, at approximately 2:54 a.m., at 132 Airline Road, Wallingford, Connecticut, Wallingford Police Officers Robert Bellucci¹ and Gordon McCaskill² fired multiple rounds at Donald Passmore³ fatally wounding him. As required by statute⁴, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated this incident. The results of this investigation are set forth in this report.

The investigation establishes that Wallingford officers responded to 132 Airline Road on a report that a man had shot himself in the face. When Officers Bellucci and McCaskill arrived, they found Donald Passmore lying in bed suffering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound under his chin. He told the officers that the gun he used was next to him. Passmore was uncooperative with the officers' efforts to get him medical help. After about nine minutes of dialogue, during which Passmore expressed a desire to die and have officers shoot him, Passmore said, "one of you is gonna go." According to the statements of Officer Bellucci and Officer McCaskill, Passmore then reached to his side and displayed a handgun. Both officers then discharged their weapons. Police recovered a loaded revolver from the bed.

Based on the facts developed during the investigation, I have determined that Officers Bellucci and McCaskill used deadly force to defend themselves from what they reasonably believed to be a threat of serious injury or death. Accordingly, I find such use of force to be objectively reasonable and justified.

INVESTIGATION

Police Reports

Officer Raymond Scheck

¹ On October 16, 2023, Robert Bellucci was a Caucasian male, age 40. He had been a Wallingford police officer for eight years. He had no disciplinary history concerning dishonesty or excessive use of force.

² On October 16, 2023, Gordon McCaskill was a Caucasian male, age 31. He had been a Wallingford police officer for five years. He had no disciplinary history concerning dishonesty or excessive use of force.

³ On October 16, 2023, Donald Passmore was a Caucasian male, age 62.

⁴ As relevant here, General 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."

On October 16, 2023, at approximately 2:33 a.m., Officer Raymond Scheck responded to 132 North Airline Road together with Officers Robert Bellucci and Gordon McCaskill. They were dispatched to that location on a report that Donald Passmore had a self-inflicted gunshot wound and still had a firearm in his possession. Passmore was reportedly still inside the house. Officer Zima also responded to assist.

Officer Scheck arrived on scene after Officers Bellucci and McCaskill. While enroute, Officer Scheck heard Officer McCaskill radio that the scene was not currently safe for medical personnel. Upon arrival, Officer Scheck entered the home. He could hear Officers Bellucci and McCaskill speaking to someone. Officer Scheck walked to the stairs of the split-level home and saw Officers Bellucci and McCaskill with their firearms drawn. They were ordering a male, later identified as Donald Passmore, to keep his hands where they could see them. When Officer Scheck walked up the stairs, he saw Passmore lying on his bed and Officers Bellucci and McCaskill standing outside the bedroom door side by side. Given the limited space at the top of the stairs, Officer Scheck went back to the bottom of the staircase.

Officer Scheck heard Passmore screaming about wanting to kill himself and wishing he were already dead. Passmore also complained about the lights pointed into the room. He continued to scream and yell. The report states:

“Officers Bellucci and McCaskill asked Donald if the firearm he used to shoot himself earlier was a long gun or a handgun and Donald admitted that it was a handgun. Officers Bellucci and McCaskill again began repeatedly telling Donald to show his hands and not to reach for anything and then ultimately ended up discharging their firearms several times.”

After the shooting, Officer McCaskill retrieved the handgun lying next to Passmore on the right side of the bed. Officer McCaskill handed the firearm to Officer Scheck who handed it to Officer Zima who secured it in his cruiser. Wallingford paramedics entered the house and determined that Passmore had a pulse. They transported him to the hospital.

Officer Scheck spoke with Barbie Poplin. She was the person who had called 911. She said that she was talking to Passmore earlier in the evening and he was upset about his mother’s recent death and other family troubles. Passmore told her that he wanted to shoot himself in the head. When Passmore began walking toward his room, she grabbed his shirt and told him not to do what she thought he was about to do. He proceeded into his room. Poplin stayed downstairs in the kitchen. Ultimately, she heard a gunshot and rushed upstairs. She saw Passmore with blood all over his face. He asked her to call 911.

While inside the house at 132 Airline Road, Officer Scheck’s body-worn camera (BWC) was activated. To view the relevant portion of the BWC recording, click [here](#).

Statements

Barbie Poplin

On October 16, 2023, OIG Inspectors interviewed Barbie Poplin at the Wallingford Police Department.

Poplin stated that prior to the shooting she and her boyfriend, Donald Passmore, had been at the home on North Airline Road and everything was going well between them. She said that Passmore had drunk at least two half pints of Captain Morgan liquor and ginger ale. Poplin stated that Passmore was depressed about a few issues and referenced that he would be better off dead.⁵

While they were sitting downstairs, Passmore got up and began to walk upstairs. She stopped him and asked him what he was going to do. He proceeded upstairs and she remained downstairs. When Poplin heard a “pop” she went upstairs to the bedroom and saw Passmore bleeding from the face. Poplin realized that Passmore had shot himself and she ran downstairs to call 911. She then ran outside because she was scared. Poplin stated that police officers arrived and entered the house. While officers were in the residence, she heard multiple shots.

During the interview, Poplin stated that she had known Passmore for a long time, but they only started dating about a month ago. She said she had been living with him for two to three weeks. Poplin reported that this wasn’t the first time that Passmore had talked about harming himself with his handgun – a .22 revolver. She said that Passmore would often remove the handgun from his dresser drawer. He called it his best friend.

Officer Gordon McCaskill

On November 21, 2023, Officer Gordon McCaskill provided a written statement to OIG inspectors. That statement may be summarized as follows:

On October 16, 2023, at approximately 2:37 a.m., Officer McCaskill was dispatched on a high priority response to 132 Airline Road, Wallingford, on a report of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The complainant had informed Dispatch that her boyfriend had shot himself in the mouth and was still alive. The complainant said that she would wait outside for the police.

⁵ One of the issues about which Passmore was depressed was a trip to Florida planned for the day of the incident. Passmore was going to help a friend travel to Florida. They had packed two vehicles earlier on 10/15/23 and planned to leave at 3:00 a.m. on 10/16/23, with Passmore driving one vehicle and the friend the other. Passmore wanted to go but he did not have the money to take the trip. Poplin told him to call the friend and let him know what he was going to do, but Passmore said that he was too embarrassed to tell him. It was not long after this conversation that Passmore went up to his bedroom and shot himself.

Officer McCaskill proceeded to the call and enroute got his individual first aid kit (IFAK) trauma bag out.

Upon arrival, Officer McCaskill met the complainant outside the house. She said that the male was in the bedroom which was located upstairs and to the left. The house was a split-level ranch. Officer McCaskill drew his firearm and entered the front door and into the living room. He announced his presence as a police officer.

The subject, later identified as Donald Passmore, began yelling at Officer McCaskill from upstairs. Officer McCaskill approached the stairs and began to communicate with Passmore and asked him where the gun was. Passmore said the gun was beside him on the bed. He asked Officer McCaskill to come upstairs. After assuring himself that Passmore was not holding a gun, Officer McCaskill moved upstairs to the doorway of the bedroom. Passmore told Officer McCaskill to shoot him. Officer McCaskill responded that he did not want to shoot him.

At this time, Officer Bellucci took a position on the right side of the doorway. He had his firearm drawn. The officers then attempted to communicate with Passmore who was very aggressive. They gave Passmore multiple commands not to touch the gun and to keep his hands in front of him. Passmore refused all efforts to get him medical attention. He said that he was going to bleed out and would die in bed. To light up the dimly lit room, the officers used their flashlights and weapon-mounted lights. Passmore did not like this and started yelling. The officers did not point their lights in Passmore's eyes so as not to aggravate the situation.

Passmore previously stated that the firearm that he used to shoot himself was beside him on the bed. There was also a long gun at the foot of the bed that Passmore described as a "powder gun."

The statement continues:

"At one point in the conversation, Passmore stated multiple times that "one of you is gonna go" and began moving his right hand towards his backside in the area where Passmore stated he had his gun. I understood this to mean Passmore was going to grab the gun and attempt to shoot Officer Bellucci or me. Passmore then moved his right hand fully behind him to where we could not see it. Officer Bellucci and I gave commands to not touch the gun and to show us his right hand. Passmore was moving a blanket behind him around as if he was searching for something.

"After a few seconds, Passmore raised his right hand up from behind his body. In his hand was a dark colored pistol. Passmore then began sweeping the pistol across the room from his right to left, toward our positions. Officer Bellucci and I then fired multiple shots.

“Passmore dropped the gun and his hands raised towards his chest. Passmore then began having agonal breaths for approximately twenty seconds. I holstered my firearm. I had Officer Bellucci cover me while I entered the room. I recovered the firearm behind Passmore and handed it off to Officer Scheck and Officer Zima who arrived as back up. Officer Zima secured the firearm in the lockbox in his marked police cruiser.”

During his interaction with Passmore, Officer McCaskill’s BWC was activated. To view the relevant portion of the BWC recording, click [here](#).

A copy of Officer McCaskill’s statement is reprinted in the [Appendix](#).

Officer Robert Bellucci

On November 21, 2023, Officer Robert Bellucci provided a written statement to OIG inspectors. That statement may be summarized as follows:

Officer Bellucci was dispatched to 132 North Airline Road on October 16, 2023, at 2:37 a.m. on a report of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Dispatch also advised that the male who shot himself was inside the home and that the gun he used was in the home as well.

Upon arrival, Officer Bellucci entered the home via the front door. Officer Gordon McCaskill was already inside speaking to a male later identified as Donald Passmore. The home was a split-level ranch style house. The front door led directly into what appeared to be a living room. Officers Bellucci and McCaskill initially stood in the living room and made verbal contact with Passmore. Passmore was lying on a bed inside a dimly lit room at the top of the stairs. He said that the gun was still beside him. Officer Bellucci wanted to assess the nature and degree of Passmore’s injuries.

Officers Bellucci and McCaskill moved up the stairs and took positions on either side of the bedroom doorway. Officer Bellucci was on the right side of the doorway and Officer McCaskill was on the left. In the bathroom to the right, Officer Bellucci observed blood. He also saw blood on the hallway floor and on the bedroom floor near Passmore. Officer Bellucci also observed a gunshot wound under Passmore’s chin.

The officers spoke to Passmore who said that he just wanted to lay there, listen to his music (which was playing in the background), bleed to death, and die. Passmore said that his gun was beside him on the bed, but Officer Bellucci could not see it from where he was standing. Passmore described the gun as a .22 caliber with nine rounds of ammunition. He said that he shot himself and pointed to the chin area below his jaw.

At one point, Passmore told the officers to shoot him. This gave Officer Bellucci the impression that he might be dealing with a “suicide by cop” situation. The officers continued speaking with Passmore. The room that he was in was poorly illuminated and the officers used their flashlights to see Passmore – particularly his hands. This use of flashlights agitated Passmore who demanded that the officers turn them off.

The officers continued speaking with Passmore, but he refused to get down off the bed and refused help. He said he just wanted to die. Officer Bellucci thought that he and Officer McCaskill were unable to back off and leave him because (1) they wanted to get him medical attention, and (2) Passmore said that he still had the gun beside him on the bed.

Officer Bellucci’s statement continues:

“Toward the end of the nine-minute encounter, Passmore verbalized that one of us was going to go. At this time, I feared for my life. It appeared that there would be no peaceful resolution with Passmore. Many thoughts raced through my mind to include being able to go home to my family and being able to watch my kids grow up.

“Passmore placed his right hand onto the bed where he had previously indicated that the gun was. It appeared as if he was feeling around for something. Passmore was ordered not to touch the gun and to raise his right hand. Passmore lifted his right arm. At which time I observed that he was holding an object that I immediately and clearly recognized as a gun. Passmore pointed the gun in our direction. I discharged my department issued firearm several times to stop the threat. Passmore then dropped the gun.

“Once I felt it was safe to enter the room, I maintained cover as Officer McCaskill placed Passmore into handcuffs. The firearm was located on the bed on the right beside Passmore. Officer McCaskill handed the firearm to Officer Schek which was later secured in a cruiser. I radioed Dispatch that the scene was secure and to send the medics in. Officer McCaskill rendered first aid to Passmore as I stepped outside to console the complainant who said that she was his girlfriend. Wallingford FD Medics arrived on scene and transported Passmore to a nearby hospital for treatment where he was pronounced deceased.”

During his encounter with Passmore, Officer Bellucci’s BWC was activated. To view the relevant portion of the BWC recording, click [here](#).

A copy of Officer Bellucci’s statement is reprinted in the [Appendix](#).

Scene

On October 16, 2023, at approximately 4:30 a.m., the Office of Inspector General requested the Connecticut State Police Eastern District Major Crime Squad (EDMCS) to respond to 132 North Airline Road., Wallingford, to assist in the investigation of an officer-involved shooting.

EDMCS detectives processed the scene collecting evidence, taking photographs and doing firearm surveys of the involved officers' firearms.

132 North Airline Road

This house is a split-level single-family home with brown wood shingle siding and white shutters. It is located adjacent to the northbound lane of North Airline Road. House decal #132 is on the front storm door to the residence. Upon inspection, there was no damage to windows or signs of forced entry into the residence.



[132 North Airline Road]

The house has 1212 square feet of living area. It has three bedrooms and one and one-half bathrooms. The house is located in a RU 40 zone with a 1.5-acre lot. The owners are listed

as the Estate of Pauline Passmore and Susan Cone. Pauline Passmore was the mother of Donald Passmore.

EDMCS detectives processed the entire house and determined that the bedroom north of the second floor landing was the primary scene location. The bedroom had wood flooring throughout. A discharged bullet casing (YP6) was located on the floor near the left door frame.



[Bullet casing]

A discharged bullet casing (YP7) was located on the floor in the center of the door frame.



[Bullet casing]

A discharged bullet casing (YP8) was located on the floor to the right of the door frame.



[Bullet casing]

A discharged bullet casing (YP9) was located on the floor to the right of the door frame and east of the YP8 bullet casing.



[Bullet casing]

A TV stand was located on the bedroom's west wall. There was a closet on the west wall to the right of the TV stand. A dresser was on the east wall. A bed was on the north wall with the head located against the east wall.



[Bed with dresser]



[Bed with dresser]

A discharged bullet casing (YP10) was located on the floor in front of the TV stand. A discharged bullet casing (YP11) was located on the floor in front of the dresser and south of the bed.



[Bullet casing]

A long rifle was located resting against the north wall between the closet and the bed. Its barrel was facing the ceiling.



[Long rifle]

There were blood drops and blood stains on the floor between the TV stand and the dresser. A large blood stain was located in front of the dresser south of the bed. Another large blood stain was located on a blue bed sheet.

There were four bullet defects in the side of the mattress. There were also bullet defects in the ceiling: one on the ceiling above the closet and two bullet defects on the ceiling above the bed. Detectives placed trajectory rods in these bullet holes.



[Trajectory rods in bullet defects in ceiling]

A discharged bullet (YP14) was located under the bed near the north wall.



[Discharged bullet]

A discharged bullet (YP13) was located on the floor under the bed near the east wall.



[Discharged bullet]

A discharged bullet (YP15) was located on the floor under the bed near the east wall and north of YP 13.



[Discharged bullet]

Revolver

Passmore's revolver was secured in a Wallingford police cruiser by Wallingford officers immediately following the shooting.



[Passmore's gun in cruiser]



[Passmore's gun]

The detectives conducted a survey of the gun and determined the following:

Passmore's gun was a Harrington & Richardson Inc., Sportsman 999 .22 long rifle double action revolver with serial number AT 060991. If fully loaded, the gun had a capacity of nine cartridges. There were six cartridges in the weapon at the time of the survey. There was a spent cartridge in the chamber. A Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms trace indicated that the revolver had been purchased from a West Virginia firearms dealer on May 19, 1979. The purchaser was listed as William Henry Brown of Middlebourne West Virginia. The trace provided no indication of how Passmore came into possession of the firearm.

Officers' Weapons

Officer Bellucci

A survey of Officer Bellucci's department issued firearm indicated that it was a Glock G45 9mm semi-automatic pistol. It had a capacity of seventeen rounds in the magazine and one in the chamber. The weapon was fully loaded with eighteen cartridges (17 + 1). Spare magazine #1 contained seven cartridges and spare magazine #2 contained seventeen cartridges.

Officer McCaskill

A survey of Officer McCaskill's department-issued firearm indicated that it was a Glock G45 9mm semi-automatic pistol. The weapon had a capacity of seventeen rounds in the magazine and one in the chamber. At the time of the survey, there were sixteen cartridges in the weapon (15 + 1). Both spare magazines were fully loaded with seventeen cartridges.

Firearms Examination

On December 9, 2024, the Firearms Unit of the State Forensic Laboratory submitted its final report on the firearms evidence seized from the scene at 132 Airline Road.

Officer McCaskill's Glock 45 9mm pistol (S/N BLKP808) was submitted to the Firearms Unit together with three magazines. One magazine contained fifteen 9mm cartridges and the two others each contained seventeen 9mm cartridges. Also submitted was an envelope labeled, "Chambered round from McCaskill #242 Duty Pistol" containing one 9mm cartridge. This firearm was test fired and determined to be operational.

Officer Bellucci's Glock 45 9mm pistol (S/N BLKP797) was submitted to the Firearms Unit together with three magazines. One magazine contained seven 9mm cartridges and the other two each contained seventeen 9mm cartridges. Also submitted was an envelope labeled,

“Chambered round from Bellucci #228 duty pistol containing one 9mm cartridge.” This firearm was test fired and determined to be operational.

The revolver found next to Passmore was submitted to the Firearms Unit. This gun was described as an H&R model 999 Sportsman .22L caliber top break revolver. The gun was loaded with six .22 LR cartridges and three empty cartridge casings. The revolver was test fired and determined to be operational.

The Firearms Unit also examined the ten 9mm shell casings submitted for examination. Through microscopic comparison, the Firearms Unit determined that two of the shell casings were fired from Officer McCaskill’s Glock 45 pistol and eight shell casings were fired from Officer Bellucci’s Glock 45 pistol.

The Firearms Unit also examined the fired bullets submitted for examination and comparison. Two submitted fired bullets were determined to have been fired from Officer McCaskill’s Glock pistol. The results for the remaining fired bullets were inconclusive and could not be identified or eliminated as having been fired from Officer Bellucci’s Glock 45 pistol.

Autopsy

Passmore was pronounced dead at 3:37 a.m. on October 16, 2023, by Doctor Butler at the Midstate Medical Center in Meriden. On October 17, 2023, an autopsy was performed at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner by Associate Medical Examiner Cori Breslauer, M.D.

The autopsy report states:

CAUSE OF DEATH: GUNSHOT WOUNDS OF TORSO

MANNER OF DEATH: HOMICIDE SHOT BY OTHER(S)

The final Anatomic Analysis lists:

- I Eight Penetrating Gunshot Wounds of Chest
- II Perforating Gunshot Wound of Head – Self-Inflicted
- III Hypertension and Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease

Gunshot Wounds of Torso

The penetrating gunshot wounds of the torso were clustered with coalescing wound paths that could not be delineated. There were eight entrance gunshot wounds of the left infrascapular back. The coalescing and intersecting wound paths injured the subcutaneous tissues and musculature of the left lumbar and thoracic back, the small bowel, the left kidney,

the spleen, the aorta, anterior vertebral bodies of the thoracic vertebrae #9-12, the posterior left ribs #11/12, the liver, right hemidiaphragm, the lower and middle lobes of the right lung, the right chest wall, and the subcutaneous tissues and musculature of the lateral right chest wall.

Eight projectiles were recovered. The overall direction of wound tracks was back to front left to right, and upward.

Head Wound – Self Inflicted

There was an entrance gunshot wound of the chin with an exit wound of the floor of the mouth, a re-entrance wound of the hard palate, and an exit wound of the right nasal bridge. The projectile did not enter the cranial cavity. The bullet essentially entered under the chin and proceeded through the mouth and exited out the nose.

Cardiovascular System

There was 30% stenosis of the left anterior descending coronary artery and 30% stenosis of the right coronary artery.

Toxicology

Samples of Passmore's bodily fluids were sent to NMS Labs in Horsham, Pennsylvania, for toxicological analysis.

The results were positive for ethanol (drinking alcohol), benzoylecgonine (cocaine degradation product), and lorazepam (anti-anxiety medication). The alcohol level was 0.17 BAC which is over twice the legal limit to drive a car.

Evidence

The eight projectiles recovered from Passmore's chest and the bullet fragment from the roof of his mouth were turned over to an OIG inspector.

FINDINGS

The investigation supports the following findings of fact:

1. On October 16, 2023, during the early morning hours, Donald Passmore was a sixty-two-year-old Caucasian male living at 132 North Airline Road Wallingford CT. According to his

girlfriend, Barbie Poplin, he was in a depressed state of mind and had earlier consumed two half pints of rum.

2. Present in the house with Passmore on October 16, 2023, was his girlfriend, Barbie Poplin. She was aware of Passmore's depressed state. While they were in the kitchen, she heard him say that he would be better off dead.

3. Passmore left the kitchen and proceeded upstairs. When Poplin heard a "pop," she went upstairs to the bedroom and saw Passmore bleeding from the face. He told her to call 911, which she did.

4. At approximately 2:37 a.m., Wallingford police officers were dispatched to 132 North Airline Road on a report of a self-inflicted gunshot wound where the subject still had a firearm in his possession.

5. Officer Gordon McCaskill was the first officer to arrive on scene. He met Barbie Poplin outside of the house and she indicated that the male was in an upstairs bedroom. Officer McCaskill entered the house with his firearm drawn and announced his presence as a police officer. He began to communicate with Passmore and asked him where the gun was. Passmore said that it was beside him on the bed. Officer McCaskill then moved upstairs to a position outside of the bedroom doorway.

6. Officer Robert Bellucci arrived at 132 North Airline Road after Officer McCaskill. He entered the house and went to the bedroom door on the opposite side from Officer McCaskill. He observed a gunshot wound under Passmore's chin.

7. For the next nine minutes the officers engaged with Passmore. Since the room was dimly lit, they used their flashlights for illumination. This upset Passmore who repeatedly directed the officers not to shine their lights at him. Passmore said that he was going to bleed out and die. He told the officers that the gun next to him was a .22 caliber revolver with nine rounds of ammunition. Passmore would not get down from the bed when directed. In general, he was uncooperative and obstreperous with the officers.

8. At one point, Passmore said, "one of you is gonna go" and moved his hand to the area of the bed where he had said his gun was located. Both officers perceived this as a serious threat. They repeatedly told Passmore to show his hands and not to touch the gun. According to the sworn statements of both officers, Passmore raised his right hand up and was holding a gun which he pointed toward the officers.

9. Officer Bellucci discharged his firearm eight times. Officer McCaskill fired twice. Eight of these gunshots struck Passmore in his torso.

10. After the shooting, Officer McCaskill retrieved a loaded revolver from the bed.

11. The medical examiner determined the cause of Passmore's death to be eight gunshot wounds of the torso. He also had a self-inflicted gunshot wound that entered under his chin with an exit wound of the right nasal bridge. The medical examiner recovered eight projectiles from Passmore's torso area. The toxicological examination of Passmore's blood was positive for alcohol, lorazepam, and cocaine metabolites.

12. The Firearms Unit determine that of the ten recovered shell casings, two were fired from Officer McCaskill's pistol and eight were fired from Officer Bellucci's pistol. The Firearms Unit also identified two of the recovered fired bullets as being fired from Officer McCaskill's pistol. The results with respect to the other recovered fired bullets were inconclusive.

LAW

The use of force by a police officer is governed by General Statutes §53a-22. The version of that statute in effect on October 16, 2023, in relevant part, provides:

“(b) Except as provided in subsection (a) ... of this section, 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 ...” (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 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, based on 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: “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

When Officers McCaskill and Bellucci entered 132 North Airline Road during the early morning hours of October 16, 2023, they encountered a subject who was depressed, intoxicated, suicidal, and uncooperative. He had just shot himself in the chin and his loaded revolver was beside him on the bed. Their initial efforts to gain Passmore’s cooperation to obtain medical help for him were unsuccessful. Their interactions with him were mostly tense and hostile. When he displayed a firearm pointed in their direction after saying “one of you is gonna go,” they responded by shooting him multiple times.

I believe that the officers’ use of deadly force in these circumstances was objectively reasonable. In their statements, both officers reported that they believed that they needed to defend themselves from the imminent use of deadly force. This belief was reasonable because a reasonable police officer in the same situation would share that belief. The other statutory reasonableness factors do not require a different result. Passmore did possess a deadly weapon

– he had just shot himself and said the gun was next to him on the bed. The officers made efforts to de-escalate the situation, and their tactics did not amount to police-created jeopardy.

In sum, I find that the use of deadly force by Officers Bellucci and McCaskill was justified under Connecticut law.

CONCLUSION

The investigation established that the use of deadly force by Officers Gordon McCaskill and Robert Bellucci resulting in the death of Donald Passmore was justified. The Office of Inspector General will take no further action on this matter.

Submitted this 10th day of January 2025.



ROBERT J. DEVLIN, JR.
INSPECTOR GENERAL

APPENDIX

Statement: Officer Robert Bellucci

Statement: Officer Gordon McCaskill

Comment

Current use-of-force instruction given to Connecticut police officers draws a distinction between use of force that is “justified” and use of force that is “necessary.” As detailed in this report, I have determined that the use of deadly force by Officers Bellucci and McCaskill was justified. Passmore’s reaching for his firearm coupled with his belligerent comments, created a threat of imminent harm to the officers. Their use of deadly force to address that threat was objectively reasonable.

Whether it was *necessary* to shoot Passmore presents a different set of considerations. Once it became clear that Passmore was hostile and the situation unsafe for medics to treat him, should a re-evaluation of police tactics have occurred? Once the police assured themselves that Passmore was alone in the house, should they have exited the house, set up a perimeter, and introduced a crisis negotiator? At that point, notwithstanding Passmore’s gunshot wound, it would seem that time would have been on the side of the police.

Even remaining in the house, was it possible to safely deploy less lethal means to gain control of Passmore? His access to a loaded firearm was clearly of grave concern. But was it possible, while maintaining cover, to introduce a chemical agent, use a bean bag gun, or even a TASER?

This comment is not meant to second guess the officers on scene, but rather to provide a framework for an after-action review of this incident. Obviously, a peaceful resolution is the goal – even in fraught situations like the present case.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Officer's Statement

Date: 11-21-23	Time Started: 11:00	Time Ended: 11:10	CFS #: IG2023-62
Location: Wallingford		Statement taken by: Viadao	

I, Gordon McCaskill Date of Birth: 3/17/1992
of Wallingford Town/City: _____ State: CT

I make the following statement, without fear, threat or promise. I have been advised that any statement(s) made herein which I do not believe to be true, and which statement is intended to mislead a public servant in the performance of his / her official function, is a crime under C.G.S. section 53a-157b and is punishable by law.

On 10/16/2023 at approximately 0230 hours I was conducting a business check at Audi of Wallingford located at 800 South Colony Road, Wallingford, CT 06492. At approximately 0237 hours, Officer Bellucci and I were dispatched on a high priority response to 132 North Airline Road, Wallingford for the report of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The complainant informed Wallingford Police Dispatch that her boyfriend had shot himself in the mouth and was still alive. The complainant stated that she would be waiting outside for the police. I activated my emergency lights and siren and proceeded to the call. While enroute to the call, I put on my protective gloves and got my IFAK (individual first aid kit) trauma bag out.

Upon my arrival, I met the complainant outside of the house. I asked her where the male was. She stated he was in the bedroom which was located upstairs and to the left. This house is a split-level ranch. I drew my firearm and entered the front door to the living room. I announced my presence giving my title, last name, and police department.

The subject, later identified as Donald Passmore, began yelling at me from upstairs. I observed a staircase to my left. I placed my IFAK on the mail table to my left. I approached the stairs and began communicating with Passmore. I asked Passmore where the gun was, and he said it was beside him on the bed. Passmore told me to come upstairs. I moved around the opening of the stairs in a semi-circle until I had an angle where I could see Passmore and made sure he did not have a firearm in his hands. Once I saw that Passmore was not holding a gun, I made my way upstairs and to the doorway of the bedroom. Passmore told me to shoot him, and I told him that I did not want to shoot him.

By affixing my signature to this statement, I acknowledge that I have read it and / or have had it read to me and it is true to the best of my knowledge & belief.

Officer: Gordon McCaskill  11/21/2023
Name Signature Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By: James Viadao  11-21-23
Name Signature Date Signed



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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At this time, I noticed Officer Bellucci was on my right side with his firearm drawn. I took cover on the left side of the doorway while Officer Bellucci took cover on the right side of the doorway. Officer Bellucci and I began communicating with Passmore. Passmore was very aggressive. During this time, we gave Passmore multiple commands to not touch the gun and to keep his hands in front of him. While speaking with Passmore, Officer Bellucci spoke to him calmly. Officer Bellucci attempted to deescalate the situation by talking to Passmore about his feelings. Officer Bellucci also tried to convince Passmore to get off the bed and come closer to us, away from the firearms in his room.

While attempting to get Passmore medical attention, he refused multiple times stating that he was going to bleed out, would die on that bed, and to come back and see him when he is "a corpse." Passmore was assured we didn't want to harm him. At one point Officer Bellucci asked him what was wrong. Passmore had no interest in talking to us or allowing us to help him. Our attempts to calm him so we could safely approach and provide medical attention lasted about nine minutes.

Officer Bellucci and I were using our weapon mounted lights and our individual flashlights to light up the room. There was one small desk lamp on that was pointing right at us making it hard to see Passmore behind it. The desk lamp also did not provide adequate light for us to see Passmore's hands or the gun he said was near him. Passmore did not like the fact that we were using our flashlights to see and was yelling at us. We did not point the lights in his eyes hoping not to aggravate the situation.

Passmore previously stated that the firearm he used to shoot himself in the head was behind him on the bed. There was also a long gun at the foot of his bed that Passmore described as "a powder gun."

At one point in the conversation, Passmore stated multiple times that "one of you is gonna go" and began moving his right hand towards his backside in the area where Passmore stated he had his gun. I understood this to mean Passmore was going to grab the gun and attempt to shoot Officer Bellucci or me. Passmore then moved his right hand fully behind him to where we could not see it. Officer Bellucci and I gave commands to not touch the gun and to show us his right hand. Passmore was moving the blanket behind him around as if he was searching for something.

After a few seconds, Passmore raised his right hand up from behind his body. In his hand was a dark colored pistol. Passmore then began sweeping the pistol across the room from his right to left, toward our positions. Officer Bellucci and I then fired multiple shots.

Passmore dropped the gun and his hands raised towards his chest. Passmore then began having

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Officer:

Gordon McCaskill
Name

[Signature]
Signature

11/21/2023
Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By:

James Virda
Name

[Signature]
Signature

11-21-23
Date Signed



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



agonal breaths for approximately twenty seconds. I holstered my firearm. I had Officer Bellucci cover me while I entered the room. I recovered the firearm behind Passmore and handed it off to Officer Scheck and Officer Zima who arrived as back up. Officer Zima secured the firearm in the lock box in his marked police cruiser.

I then handcuffed Passmore with his hands in front of him. I yelled to Officer Scheck to get my medic bag and told him where it was. Officer Scheck gave me my medic bag and I began a trauma assessment. Wallingford Fire Department was staging down the street, waiting for the scene to be secure. Once Passmore was handcuffed, Wallingford FD medics were instructed to enter. I gave a brief report to the medics, who took over medical care.

I exited the house and instructed Officer Zima to get crime scene tape and shut down the entire property. Officer Lobo arrived on scene. Officer Lobo moved his marked police cruiser several houses south of the incident location to shut down northbound traffic. I moved my marked police cruiser to the intersection of North Airline Road and Pauline Road to shut down southbound traffic.

Wallingford Fire Department transported Passmore to MidState Medical Center where he was pronounced dead at approximately 0337 hours.

Officer Lobo transported Officer Bellucci and me to the Wallingford Police Department where we awaited troopers from the Connecticut State Police Major Crimes Unit and the Office of the Inspector General.

This case is active pending an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General.

By affixing my signature to this statement, I acknowledge that I have read it and / or have had it read to me and it is true to the best of my knowledge & belief.

Officer: Gordon McLaski II [Signature] 11/21/2023
Name Signature Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By: James Viadana [Signature] 11-21-23
Name Signature Date Signed



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Officer's Statement

Date: 11-21-23	Time Started: 11:00	Time Ended: 11:10	CFS #: IG2023-62
Location: Wallingford		Statement taken by: Viades	

I, Robert Bellucci Date of Birth: 10/15/83
of Wallingford Town/City: CT State: _____

I make the following statement, without fear, threat or promise. I have been advised that any statement(s) made herein which I do not believe to be true, and which statement is intended to mislead a public servant in the performance of his / her official function, is a crime under C.G.S. section 53a-157b and is punishable by law.

On 10/16/23 at 0237 hours, I was dispatched to 132 North Airline Road for a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the face. Officer McCaskill was dispatched as well. While enroute, Wallingford PD Dispatch advised us that the male who shot himself was still inside the home and that the gun was still inside as well. Officer McCaskill arrived on scene shortly before I did and spoke with the complainant outside the home.

Upon arrival I entered the home via the front door. Officer McCaskill was already inside the home speaking with the male who was later identified as Donald Passmore. The home was a split-level ranch style house. The front door where we entered led us directly into what appeared to be a living room. Officer McCaskill and I initially stood in the living room where verbal contact was made with Passmore. From where I was standing in the living room, I was able to see Passmore lying on a bed inside a dimly lit room at the top of the stairs. Passmore indicated that the gun was still beside him. Given the fact that he had shot himself somewhere in the face or head, I wanted to assess any injuries and see if he would let us help him.

Officer McCaskill and I walked up the staircase and maintained cover on both sides of the bedroom doorway. I positioned myself on the right side of the doorway as Officer McCaskill positioned himself on the left. As we were walking up the stairs, I observed a lot

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Officer: Robert Bellucci Name [Signature] Signature 11/21/23 Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By: James Viades Name [Signature] Signature 11-21-23 Date Signed



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



of blood in the bathroom, which was to the right, on the hallway floor, and in the bedroom on the floor near Passmore. I observed what appeared to be a gunshot wound under Passmore's chin.

Officer McCaskill and I continued speaking with Passmore for approximately nine minutes. During which time, Passmore commented that he was sixty-two years old and had had enough. He indicated that he just wanted to lay there, listen to his music which was playing in the background, bleed to death, and die. He did not appear to want any assistance. Passmore indicated that his gun was still beside him on the bed. I was unable to see it from where I was standing at the time. Passmore indicated that it was a .22 caliber, and that he had nine rounds of ammunition in it. He said he shot himself while pointing to the chin area below his jaw.

There was also a rifle type gun at the foot of the bed against the wall. At one point Passmore told us to shoot him, which in conjunction with his demeanor gave me the impression that this could turn into a "suicide by police" situation. Passmore was assured that we did not want to shoot him, nor did we want him to die several times.

Officer McCaskill and I continued speaking with Passmore calmly, however, the room where Passmore was in was poorly illuminated. There was a small light in the corner of the room opposite Passmore, which did not provide ample light. Officer McCaskill and I had to use our flashlights which were directed towards the floor to keep the room illuminated enough to see Passmore, and more importantly his hands to ensure Officer safety. Passmore at times became agitated that we were using flashlights and ordered us to turn them off. While I did not want to agitate Passmore, the use of flashlights was necessary so that we could see into the room. Officer McCaskill and I tried to calmly remind Passmore of this. While speaking with Passmore he also had to be reminded several times to keep his hands where we could see them, and not to reach for the gun.

Officer McCaskill and I tried generating conversation with Passmore to deescalate the situation, but it appeared as though he had already made up his mind. Passmore refused to get down off the bed and refused our help. He indicated that he did not care what we

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Officer: Robert Bellucci [Signature] 11/21/23
Name Signature Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By: James Vixedo [Signature] 11-21-23
Name Signature Date Signed



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thought or what we wanted, and that he just wanted to die. Passmore was given several instructions to reduce the risk and deescalate the situation, but he would not comply.

Given the nature of Passmore's injuries we were unable to back off and leave him be as we ultimately wanted to get him medical attention and talk him out of killing himself. Since Passmore indicated that he still had a gun beside him on the bed, Officer McCaskill and I had to remain in a position of cover behind the walls with our guns drawn.

Toward the end of the nine-minute encounter, Passmore verbalized that one of us was going to go. At this time, I feared for my life. It appeared that there would be no peaceful resolution with Passmore. Many thoughts raced through my mind to include being able to go home to my family, and being able to watch my kids grow up.

Passmore placed his right hand onto the bed where he had previously indicated that the gun was. It appeared as if he was feeling around for something. Passmore was ordered not to touch the gun and to raise his right hand. Passmore lifted his right arm. At which time I observed that he was holding an object that I immediately and clearly recognized as a gun. Passmore pointed the gun in our direction. I discharged my department issued firearm several times to stop the threat. Passmore then dropped the gun.

Once I felt it was safe to enter the room, I maintained cover as Officer McCaskill placed Passmore into handcuffs. The firearm was located on the bed on the right beside Passmore. Officer McCaskill handed the firearm to Officer Scheck which was later secured in a cruiser. I radioed Dispatch that the scene was secure and to send the medics in. Officer McCaskill rendered first aid to Passmore as I stepped outside to console the complainant who said she was his girlfriend. Wallingford FD Medics arrived on scene and transported Passmore to a nearby hospital for treatment where he was pronounced deceased.

By affixing my signature to this statement, I acknowledge that I have read it and / or have had it read to me and it is true to the best of my knowledge & belief.

Officer: Robert Bellucci [Signature] 11/21/23
Name Signature Date Signed

Personally appeared the signer of the foregoing statement and made oath before me to the truth of the matters contained therein. If notarized, endorse here:

Oath Administered By: James Viordeau [Signature] 11-21-23
Name Signature Date Signed