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INVESTIGATION OF APRIL 10 OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTING IN POTTSTOWN CONCLUDES; OFFICERS CLEARED IN USE OF FORCE

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (May 8, 2020)—Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele announced today that the investigation of two Pottstown police officers' fatal shooting of an armed suspect inside a residence in the 300 block of West King Street in Pottstown was a lawful use of force.

The independent investigation of the shooting was conducted by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau, as is normal procedure for officer-involved shootings in Montgomery County. The Pottstown Police Department and the officers involved cooperated with the investigation. Numerous witnesses were interviewed as part of the investigation.

The investigation revealed that Pottstown police were dispatched at 8:03 p.m. Friday, April 10 after the 911 call center received three separate calls regarding a disturbance in the area of 313 W. King Street in Pottstown. Two uniformed Pottstown police officers were dispatched and arrived separately on scene to find the interior door to the residence open but the screen/storm door was closed. Officers reported hearing a "thumping" sound coming from the second floor of the residence. Based upon the 911 calls and the sounds indicating a possible physical altercation occurring inside the residence, the officers acted reasonably in entering the house after announcing their presence.

From witness and police accounts, the investigation found that once on scene, officers announced "Pottstown Police" at least twice and then entered the home. As one officer went toward the stairway, he immediately encountered a male, Jonathan Adams, holding a firearm. Adams called the officer an explicative and continued advancing down the stairs toward him. The officer yelled to his partner that the subject had a gun, which the other officer broadcast over the police radio. Adams refused commands to drop the gun and fired at the first officer, missing him but causing the drywall near him to shatter. Officers returned fire, striking Adams, who fell to the living room floor. A Glock 9 mm firearm was recovered near the body. One officer rendered aid to Adams until EMS arrived, while the other officer searched upstairs, finding two small children hiding in the bedroom. The children were unharmed.

The investigation also revealed that prior to the police arriving on the scene, a neighbor friend had come outside after hearing someone moaning. He observed Adams sitting on the ground in front of his house, and he went to check on him. Adams pushed him and tried to fight him, then as the friend retreated, Adams abruptly turned and went into his house. The friend feared that Adam's was going to get a gun and told his wife to call someone. The friend's wife was one of the 911 callers.

On April 12, an autopsy was performed on the body by the Montgomery County Coroner's Office, which determined that Adams died of multiple gunshot wounds. Toxicology results also came back and found PCP and marijuana in the Adam's blood.

The Glock firearm used by Adams—who is legally not able to possess a firearm—was registered to his girlfriend. When examined by a Montgomery County Detective Bureau firearms and ballistics expert, the Glock was found to have damage consistent with being struck by a bullet.

“Disturbance calls can be some of the most dangerous calls a police officer responds to. These two Pottstown police officers entered the residence after hearing sounds of possible abuse from the second floor of the residence and were fired upon,” said Steele. “They acted by discharging their firearms to put a stop to the risk to themselves, each other and others inside and outside of the house. Our investigation determined the facts of this case supported the use of deadly force.”

In Pennsylvania, the use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer is governed by Section 508 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code. A law enforcement officer is “justified in using deadly force only when he believes that such force is necessary to prevent death or serious bodily injury to himself or such other person...” 18 Pa.C.S.A. §508(a). In addition, the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers is justified to defeat...the escape of a person who possesses a deadly weapon, or otherwise indicates that he will endanger human life or inflict serious bodily injury unless arrested without delay. 18 Pa.C.S.A. §508(a)(1)(i)(ii).

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele