



Barron County District Attorney

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REPORT ON THE OFFICER INVOLVED DEATH OF **ZACHARY J. VEITCH** **November 6, 2023**

INTRODUCTION

The District Attorney's Office has received and is reviewing information concerning a threat directed at officers who were involved in the Officer Involved Death (OID) of Zachary J. Veitch. The law enforcement officers names have not been disclosed in this report for their protection pending completion of the criminal investigation into the threat to harm them.

At the time of the incident, Veitch was on probation after pleading guilty to punching a police officer in the face in 2021, and randomly entering a Rice Lake business and punching an employee in the face, in March 2023. Veitch had a lengthy history involving mental health treatment.

Once again, the destructive role that controlled substances have had in our community was evident in this incident. Residents at the Riverside Arms apartment complex where Veitch lived, in the City of Rice Lake, described his use of methamphetamine which they recognized from the smell coming from Veitch's apartment. Agents with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) located a green leafy substance consistent with marijuana on the nightstand in Veitch's bedroom when they examined the scene.

Veitch's ongoing use of controlled substances likely exacerbated his mental health disorders. As had happened in the past, Veitch became violent and dangerous on the night when police were called to the report of a stabbing victim at Riverside Arms.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S NO CHARGING DECISION

I have determined on the basis of my observations at the scene of the incident and my review of the DCI Investigation Report that the use of deadly force by officers who responded to Veitch's apartment was reasonable and, therefore, privileged under the law of self-defense and defense of others. Responding officers acted

reasonably when they used deadly force to protect themselves and other residents at Riverside Arms.

Officers were confronted with the urgency of taking Veitch into custody before he harmed anyone else. Veitch had already slashed and bloodied one of the residents who live at Riverside Arms, an apartment complex where residents with varying degrees of special needs and vulnerabilities live. Officers knew that Veitch had been seen with a knife, but were unsure if he had access to other weapons or firearms in his apartment. Officers were also unsure if there were additional victims inside Veitch's apartment.

The victim that Veitch slashed felt he wanted to kill her. Veitch attempted to stab a second resident before Veitch ran into his room. Under these circumstances, officers determined they had no alternative but to enter Veitch's apartment and take him into custody.

No charges will be filed against any of the officers involved in this incident. Their use of deadly force was justified in response to actions taken by Veitch who came at officers holding a knife in a manner that indicated he was intent on stabbing any one of them after he slashed one resident and attempted to stab another resident before officers arrived.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

The City of Rice Lake Police Department turned over complete control of the OID investigation to DCI. Agents with DCI immediately started their investigation on the night of the incident. DCI agents began the process of interviewing the involved officers and gathering information. DCI agents interviewed residents at Riverside Arms who were involved or had first-hand information regarding the incident. DCI agents collected evidence, interviewed relevant witnesses, viewed and listened to video and audio taken from the body cameras of the involved officers, took photographs of the scene, and reviewed the Call Detail Report (CAD) of the incident.

The DCI Investigation Report was turned over to the Barron County District Attorney's office on November 2, 2023. In addition to reviewing the entire DCI Investigation Report, I viewed the video and audio taken from the involved officers' body cameras which recorded the entirety of the incident. I personally went to the scene on the night of the incident and observed how close Veitch was to the officers when he exited his bedroom holding a knife above his head as he quickly moved in the direction of two of the officers.

The officers had only seconds to react when Veitch came at them holding a knife. In the small confines of Veitch's apartment, officers were justified in the split second decision they made to utilize deadly force.

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

On October 8, 2023 at approximately 5:26 PM, L.B.J., a resident at Riverside Arms, called 911 reporting that a female resident, who was later identified as C.S.K., was stabbed by another resident. When officers arrived at the apartment complex, they were advised by other residents that the person who stabbed C.S.K. was Veitch. C.S.K. had cuts to her arm that were bleeding, including a laceration on her right shoulder, an abrasion from her shoulder to her elbow, and a laceration on the top of her forearm.

When interviewed, C.S.K. stated she was in her kitchen cooking when she heard the door to her apartment jiggle. C.S.K. heard noises coming from the hallway and opened the door to see what was happening. C.S.K. stated Veitch was in the hallway making satanic statements. Veitch ran past her and around the corner to where she could no longer see him in the hallway. C.S.K. stated she made a statement along the lines that, in the name of Jesus Christ, Satan would not hurt her.

C.S.K. stated that Veitch came back to where she was standing "as fast as lightning," with a knife in his right hand and began to slash her. C.S.K. stated Veitch slashed four to six times on her upper right arm. C.S.K. stated she believes Veitch wanted to kill her and would have slashed her throat except for the fact that she was able to raise her right arm up to block his slashes. C.S.K. described the knife as having a sharp silver blade with a black handle. C.S.K. stated she began yelling repeatedly in the hallway, "I've been stabbed. Call 911."

D.K.H., another resident at Riverside Arms, was interviewed. D.K.H. stated that he was coming in from smoking a cigarette outside. When D.K.H. got to the third floor from the staircase closest to Veitch's apartment, he observed Veitch running down the hallway, banging on the walls and yelling. D.K.H. stated he was speaking with C.S.K. when she opened the door to her apartment to see what was going on. D.K.H. stated Veitch came back down the hallway and attacked C.S.K. D.K.H. observed Veitch holding some type of object in his hand.

D.K.H. stated that Veitch confronted and attempted to stab him. When Veitch did so, D.K.H. stated he recognized the object in Veitch's hand was a knife. D.K.H. was able to block Veitch from stabbing him with his sweatshirt or jacket. D.K.H. stated that, after Veitch attempted to stab him, Veitch ran back towards his apartment.

Officers responded to Veitch's apartment. The door to Veitch's apartment was locked. One of the officers on scene obtained a master key. Another officer responded with his/her K9 partner. A third officer, while standing outside the door to Veitch's apartment after he/she and another officer knocked and announced they were from the Rice Lake Police Department, heard Veitch say, "If I see law enforcement they'll be dead," or something similar.

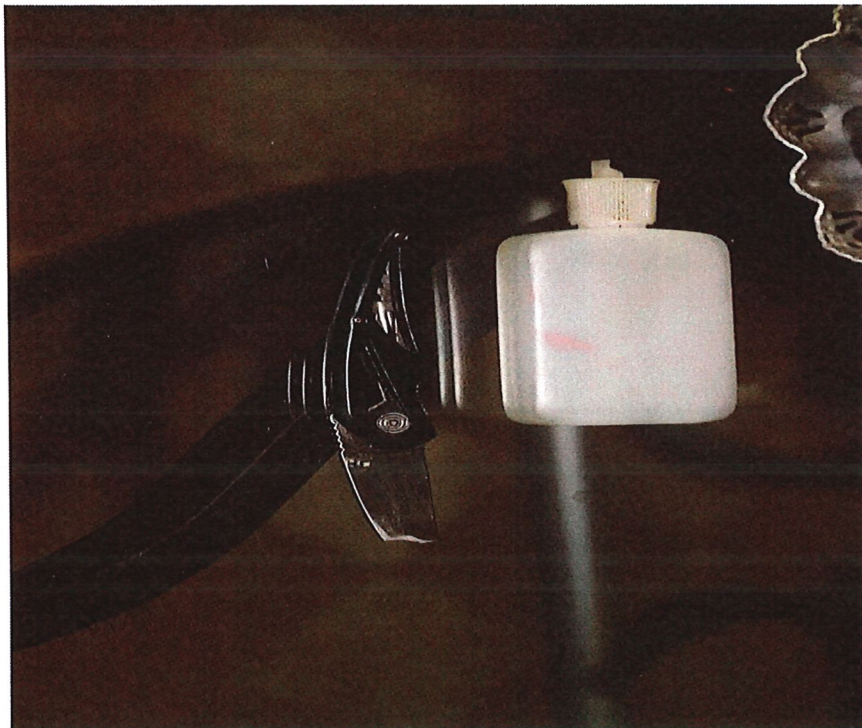
Officers yelled for Veitch to open the door and come out of the apartment multiple times, that they had a K9 with them, and that the dog would bite if released into the apartment. Officers received no response. The K9 was deployed and officers entered the apartment using the master key. No one was observed in the living room/kitchen areas of the apartment.

Officers observed a closed door in the apartment believed to be a bedroom. When an officer attempted to open the bedroom door, he/she felt someone pushing back on the door to keep it closed. An officer kicked open the bedroom door where Veitch had barricaded himself. The K9 deployed into the bedroom. Veitch immediately exited the bedroom holding a knife in his hand in an upward to downward stabbing position. One officer pivoted to his/her left while another officer backed away as quickly as he/she could. An officer deployed his taser with no apparent effect on Veitch.

Officers yelled at Veitch to drop the knife. Instead, still holding the knife in a stabbing motion, Veitch quickly moved towards an officer standing in the living room, and was coming directly at him/her. The officer in the living room, fearing for his/her life, fired his/her duty-issued handgun at the same time that two other officers also discharged their firearms.

Veitch fell to the floor still clenching the knife in his hand. Officers rendered aid to Veitch, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

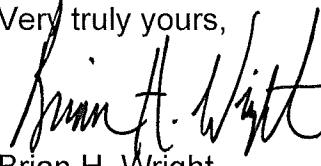
The knife, which matches the description of the knife C.S.K. and D.K.H. described, was recovered and is shown below. The tip of the knife was recovered from Veitch's abdomen.



CONCLUSION

Officers acted reasonably and were justified in using deadly force when they attempted to take Zachary Veitch into custody. Officers have a duty to protect the citizens of Barron County. On the night of October 8, 2023, officers were acting in accordance with that duty and were fully justified in using deadly force when confronted with the risk of death or great bodily harm to themselves, to the residents who live at Riverside Arms, and to the general public.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian H. Wright". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Brian H. Wright

cc: Barron County Sheriff's Department
City of Rice Lake Police Department