

Rapid City Police Department Officer Involved Shooting Summary Detailing Events That Took Place on November 18, 2022

On November 18, 2022, the Rapid City Police Department (RCPD) requested the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigate a single officer involved shooting that occurred at 330 Philadelphia Street in Rapid City, S.D. James Mathew Murphy was fatally shot during a confrontation with a Rapid City Police Officer. The following is a synopsis of the events that occurred and the subsequent investigation that was conducted by the DCI.

SYNOPSIS

On November 18, 2022, at 5:22 A.M. (MST), Pennington County Public Safety Dispatch received a call from a concerned resident from the apartment complex located at 330 Philadelphia Street in Rapid City. The caller informed dispatch that a resident (James Murphy) was running up and down the halls of the fifth floor, possibly having a mental episode. The caller reported that Murphy was hearing voices and thought that the cops were trying to kill him.

Officer #1 was dispatched to the call for service, arriving in the apartment complex parking lot at 5:35 A.M. Officer #1 entered the building, which was secured by a secondary door to gain access inside the building. Officer #1 retrieved a key to the door through a first responder lockbox located within the entryway. Officer #1 unlocked the door, then returned the key to the lockbox. After securing the key, Officer #1 turned to enter the apartment lobby. As Officer #1 opened the interior door to the apartment building, Murphy was observed across the lobby with a knife in his hand. Officer #1 attempted to greet Murphy who rapidly ran toward Officer #1 with the knife raised. Officer #1 attempted to retreat into the entryway as Murphy charged toward Officer #1. With the knife in his hand, Murphy made a lunging motion toward Officer #1. Officer #1 fired their duty pistol, striking Murphy in the arm. Officer #1 deflected the knife with their left hand while Murphy grabbed Officer #1's pistol hand. Officer #1 fought off Murphy's grip and fired a second round, striking Murphy in the head and incapacitating him.

Officer #1 believed they were stabbed during the altercation and requested back up. Officer #1 rendered first aid to Murphy until additional law enforcement and EMS arrived. Murphy was transported to Monument Hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

The shooting incident was captured by Officer #1's body-worn camera as well as the apartment security camera system. A witness to the shooting was identified and interviewed by DCI.

The shooting scene was secured by the Pennington County Sheriff's Office pending a DCI investigation. DCI Agents contacted the Rapid City Police Officer involved in the shooting.

DCI Agents documented that Officer #1 was wearing their Rapid City Police Department issued uniform. Officer #1's duty firearm was documented and inventoried as follows:

- Glock 9MM handgun and magazine containing 16 unspent cartridges of ammunition (2 cartridges short of full capacity).
- Two spare magazines containing seventeen cartridges each (full capacity).

DCI Agents and a Meade County Sheriff's Office Investigator conducted the shooting investigation. The South Dakota Highway Patrol mapped the scene.

Video camera footage obtained from the apartment building showed Murphy stabbing himself multiple times with the knife prior to Officer #1's arrival.

SCENE INVESTIGATION

The shooting scene investigation conducted by the DCI produced items of evidence that confirmed statements given by Officer #1, witnesses, and video obtained from cameras.

DCI Agents collected two spent 9MM shell casings consistent with the position where Officer #1 fired their weapon. These casing were collected inside the small entryway area between the two doors.

The knife possessed by Murphy was located near his body outside the exterior door. The blade of the knife contained a reddish-brown substance consistent with blood.

Inside the lobby area of the apartment, investigators documented a blood drip trail consistent with someone walking around while actively bleeding.

A Search Warrant was executed on Murphy's apartment and vehicle.

INTERVIEW: OFFICER #1

On November 21, 2022, DCI Agents interviewed Officer #1. Officer #1 described their involvement and thought process during the shooting incident.

Officer #1 was dispatched to a call for service at 330 Philadelphia Street for a male running up and down the halls creating a disturbance. Dispatch advised Officer #1 that mental health concerns were present, and the individual might be James Murphy.

Officer #1 arrived at 330 Philadelphia Street and began to enter the building through the entryway area. Officer #1 entered the exterior door of the entryway and did not notice anything suspicious in the visible lobby area of the apartment building. Officer #1 then retrieved a key to the building from a first responder lockbox on the wall of the entryway. After opening the interior door to the apartment building, Officer #1 turned and placed the key back inside the lockbox. After replacing the key, Officer #1 turned and saw a male in the common area who they recognized as James Murphy from a photograph provided to Officer #1 from dispatch. Officer #1 observed Murphy holding a large "butcher knife" with blood on it. Murphy was standing next to a female in the common area.

Officer #1 called out to Murphy using Murphy's first name in an attempt to deescalate Murphy. At this point, Murphy sprinted toward Officer #1. Officer #1 drew their duty pistol as Murphy closed the distance, coming chest to chest with Officer #1. Officer #1 felt pressure on their abdomen in an area not protected by the ballistic vest. Officer #1 believed the pressure had come from being stabbed with the knife.

Officer #1 was pushed into a corner of the entryway with their back against the wall. Officer #1 attempted to fire their duty pistol but was unsure if it was firing or not, due to the duty pistol being up against them. Murphy side-stepped and Officer #1 felt Murphy's hands run down their arm and end up on Officer #1's duty pistol. Officer #1 pulled away and fired their duty pistol, striking Murphy in the head. Officer #1 recognized Murphy was incapacitated and no longer a threat. Officer #1 radioed for assistance and for medical to respond.

Officer #1 retrieved their medical equipment and rendered aid to Murphy until additional resources arrived. After other law enforcement arrived, Officer #1 removed their ballistic vest and checked themselves for any injuries. No injuries were found.

Officer #1 advised they shot Murphy because the officer thought Murphy was trying to kill the officer. Due to the close confinement of space and Murphy running at Officer #1, the officer was unable to deescalate the situation in such a short amount of time.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

DCI Agents interviewed a witness who was present in the lobby area of the apartment during the shooting.

The witness stated that Murphy walked into the lobby and was carrying a knife. Murphy was bleeding and had a wound on his abdomen. Murphy attempted to stab himself and was throwing blood on the floor of the lobby. Murphy was making statements that the police were chasing him.

When Officer #1 arrived and opened the lobby door, Murphy ran at Officer #1 with the knife raised. Officer #1 fired two shots at Murphy inside the entryway. The witness believed that Murphy was attempting to kill Officer #1.

The witness was familiar with Murphy, as they both reside in the apartment. The witness was in fear for their safety based on Murphy's behavior.

The manager and other tenants of the apartment were interviewed by DCI. Murphy was described as being schizophrenic and regularly having mental episodes at the apartment. Other tenants of the apartment building were in fear of Murphy when he would have these mental episodes.

Family members and friends of Murphy were interviewed by DCI, showing a history of mental illness and erratic behavior.

VIDEO EVIDENCE

Apartment security camera footage showed Murphy coming out of his apartment on the fifth floor around 5 A.M. Murphy had a knife in his hand and began knocking or attempting to enter neighboring apartments. At one point, Murphy takes the knife and stabs himself in the abdomen.

Murphy walked down the stairwell into the lobby where he encountered the witness. Murphy again stabbed himself and paced around the lobby. Murphy stood by the entryway and looked out as if he was expecting someone. When Officer #1 arrived, Murphy charged at Officer #1 in a threatening manner. Murphy appeared to collide with Officer #1 as they fell back into the entryway. Murphy's body fell through the exterior door and landed outside after being shot.

Audio/video recordings from Officer #1's body worn camera captured the shooting incident. The video depicted Officer #1 arriving at the apartment complex and gaining access through the first responder lockbox in the entryway. Once Officer #1 opened the lobby door, Murphy can be seen across the lobby. Murphy charged the moment Officer #1 greeted him. Murphy had the knife raised chest high in a threatening manner. Officer #1 attempted to step back into the entryway as Murphy closed the distance. Officer #1 fired as Murphy came into close contact, then fired again as the two were entangled in the entryway.

Officer #1 radioed for backup and medical units, indicating they may have been stabbed. Officer #1 gave commands to the witness before retrieving medical supplies from their patrol vehicle. Officer #1 attempted life-saving measures on Murphy prior to other law enforcement arriving. Officer #1's ballistic vest and duty belt were removed and the officer was checked for injuries.

FORENSIC EXAMINATION

The South Dakota Forensic Laboratory (SDFL) conducted firearm testing on evidence recovered at the scene. The two cartridge casings recovered at the scene were fired from Officer #1's Glock 17 9MM duty pistol.

MEDICAL REPORTS AND CRIMINAL HISTORY

A drug screen and blood alcohol test were conducted on Officer #1. The results were negative.

An autopsy performed on Murphy showed that he suffered two gunshot wounds and a stab wound. Murphy's blood alcohol content was recorded as not detected and a drug screen showed the presence of marijuana in his system.

A criminal background check of Murphy showed a history of criminal offenses to include arrests for assault, domestic violence, drug and alcohol related offenses.

INVESTIGATION RESULTS

Based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer present at the scene utilized deadly force in a situation that was tense, uncertain, and building. James Murphy, armed with a knife and charging at the officer, was a clear and present danger to the officer present at the scene. Officer #1 believed they were in a situation in which Murphy was attempting to inflict serious injury or death and responded with deadly force.

It is the conclusion of this report and the Attorney General that the officer was justified in firing their duty weapon and using lethal force.



A still photograph taken from a Rapid City Police Officer's body-worn camera shows James Mathew Murphy moving toward the officer with a knife in hand.