

State of Connecticut
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Report Concerning
Use of Deadly Force by the Bristol Police Department on October 5, 2023

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Inspector General

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Acknowledgments

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

- *Connecticut State Police Central District Major Crime Squad*
- *Bristol Police Department*
- *New Britain State's Attorney's Office*
- *Firearm and Toolmark section of the Connecticut Forensic Science Laboratory*

INTRODUCTION

This case concerns Bristol Police Officer Spencer Boisvert, who fired his duty pistol at Suzanne Laprise inside the Bristol Police Department on October 10, 2023. She was not struck.¹ As required by statute², the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated this incident. The results of that investigation are contained in this report.

At 11:38 p.m. on October 5, 2023, Laprise parked a car in front of the Bristol Police Department at 131 North Main Street and walked into the lobby. Prior to arriving, she had been drinking alcohol at a bar in Bristol. The police department lobby has a seating area and an intercom system through which to communicate with police personnel. There are thick glass windows facing the lobby and two doors on either side of the windows. These are secured doors to the interior of the police department. Laprise walked into the lobby holding a gun at her head and walked up the window. She banged on the window about a dozen times with the gun, then fired it at the window and, moments later, at the door to the left of the window. Officer Boisvert was positioned in the interior of the police department along a hallway behind a door to the right of glass windows. He could see Laprise from his position. He fired two shots from his duty pistol at Laprise. Neither shot penetrated the window in the door. Moments later, during a time when Laprise put her gun down, officers rushed out of the left door, subdued Laprise with a Taser, and placed her under arrest.

In summary, the investigation establishes that at the time that Officer Boisvert discharged his firearm, Laprise was actively using deadly force against members of the Bristol Police Department and Boisvert acted justifiably in attempting to stop the threat.

INVESTIGATION

Dispatch Radio

At 11:39 p.m., a Bristol Police Dispatcher radioed to other officers that a woman entered the lobby carrying a gun. The following is a transcript of the radio traffic:

¹ At the time, Laprise was a 51-year-old Caucasian female, and Boisvert was a 29-year-old Caucasian male with no disciplinary history in three years with the department.

² 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.”

11:39:17 Bristol you got a lady with a gun in the lobby.

11:39:23 What's in the lobby?

11:39:26 Lady with a firearm

11:39:43 Looks like a female with a black ...

11:39:47 Looks like the firearm might be at her head

11:39:52 ... North hallway, north door right now

11:39:58 She's sitting on the north side, north side

11:40:03 Looks like the firearm might be up to her head

11:40:43 Shots fired. We got two cars going out to the front of the building.
SHOT [To hear this transmission, click [here](#).]

Statements / Reports

Patrolman Duncan's Report

On November 24, 2023, Patrolman John Duncan wrote a report about the incident in the lobby. Duncan was filling out paperwork in an arson case when he heard banging noises coming from the front of the police department. The dispatcher radioed for all available units in the department that there was a woman with a gun in the front lobby. With their pistols drawn, Officer Jared Yager, Officer Jason DaCosta, Officer John Dietter, Officer Timothy Hall, Officer Christopher Bornder, Officer Hunter Damon-Smith and Duncan all went to the South Hall entrance of the front lobby.

Once at the south door, Officer Duncan and Officers Yager and Damon-Smith went around to the north hall toward the north entrance to the lobby. Upon reaching the north hall, he saw Officer Boisvert with his gun drawn pointed at the lobby. Officers Duncan, Damon-Smith and Yager had their pistols drawn as well. Officer Boisvert asked if the windows to the lobby were bulletproof but did not get a definitive answer. Officer Boisvert then fired two shots in the direction of the lobby. The dispatcher informed them the woman no longer had the gun in her hand. At that point officers from behind both the north and south doors rushed into the lobby. Officer DaCosta tased the woman and multiple officers provided her medical attention.

Detective Lattanzio's Report

Detective Joanna Lattanzio wrote a report on October 6, 2023, about the incident. She was sitting at her desk in the police department when she heard over the radio that a woman walked into the lobby with a firearm. She left her office and followed other officers down the hallway to the north entrance. She heard two gunshots that sounded like they came from inside the hallway. She took cover in a doorway. She heard someone say, "go, go" and saw other officers move out from the north hall into the lobby and she followed them. In the lobby she saw a woman, later identified as Suzanne Laprise, crying on the ground as she was being handcuffed. She was asked if she had been shot and she said that she had been shot in the chest. A Taser probe was located on her left chest. Detective Lattanzio and another officer looked for other people in the lobby and found none. They went outside the front entrance and noticed a car parked oddly in front of the police department. No one was in the car. She went back to Laprise and checked her for other weapons. She asked if she was injured and Laprise complained of a bump on her head. Laprise was crying and said she wanted to die. Bristol Hospital Ambulance responded and took Laprise to the emergency room.

Detective Lattanzio then went to the Bristol Sports Bar at 369 North Main Street, where she interviewed Barbara Kellems, a patron at the bar that evening. Kellems said she arrived at the bar at around 9:45 p.m. and had two drinks then encountered a woman later identified as Laprise. Laprise told her that she had a disabled son and felt trapped. She said she had a daughter who was raped in prison. Kellems shared with the detective how Laprise had told her she was depressed, suffered from mental health problems, and wanted to get help. At one point Laprise told Kellems, "my boyfriend is a New York City cop. I took his gun and it has no safety on it." Laprise indicated that it was in the purse she was carrying.

Laprise then said to Kellems, "I'm going to go to the Bristol Police Department and tell them to kill me or I will shoot them." Kellems said she told Laprise to go home and sleep on it. She said Laprise agreed to go home and got in her vehicle and drove off. Kellems told the bartender what Laprise said and the bartender suggested she call the police. At that time another patron in the bar said that Laprise had stopped her car in front of the Bristol Police Department.³

Statement of Richard Schiffres

Bristol officers interviewed Richard Schiffres, a cook and co-owner of Bristol Sports Bar. He gave a sworn statement. He said that on October 5th⁴ at about 11:08 p.m., he was having

³ The Bristol Police Department is about 4/10 of a mile south from the Bristol Sports Bar along North Main Street.

⁴ In his statement, he gives the date as October 6th, but this can be attributed to a scrivener's error, as the statement was taken after midnight the night of the incident.

beer and a cigarette at a table outside the bar. A woman he didn't know exited the bar and sat down next to him. She began talking about how her life "sucked" and that she just had a fight with her boyfriend, who she said was a former New York police officer. She said she wanted to go to the Bristol Police Department with his gun. She said she hated her life and wanted to go to the police department and pull her gun out and have police shoot her. She said she wanted to die and could not do it on her own. Schriffres said a woman named Barbara began speaking with the woman, and he went inside. When he returned, Barbara told him the woman had told her she was going to the Bristol Police Department with her gun. He said he then called the Bristol Police Department and told them that a woman was coming there with a gun.

Patrolman Yager's Report

Officer Jared Yager wrote a report on November 23, 2023. The relevant portion of the report follows.

Officer Yager was in the report room writing a report on October 5 when he heard muffled banging sounds. He and another officer first ran to the south side hallway toward the lobby. He saw Laprise wearing a black tank top and holding a gun. He was unsure if the walls or doors were resistant to bullets. Officer Yager then went around to the north side of the hallway to get a different view of the lobby. Officer Boisvert was already set up in the north hallway with his pistol pointed at the lobby door. Officer Yager could see Laprise walking around the lobby holding a gun. He heard two more shots from the lobby. Officer Boisvert then fired two shots at Laprise when she appeared through the window of the hallway door. The shots did not strike Laprise because of the bullet resistant glass in the door. Shortly after, he heard Laprise scream after she had been struck by another officer's taser. Officers rushed in from both hallways and Laprise was handcuffed. Laprise kept yelling that she wanted to die and that she wanted officers to kill her.

EMS personnel came to treat Laprise. She was taken to Bristol Hospital and Officer Yager went with her. While Laprise was being treated in the emergency room, she continued to make comments that she wanted to die, was tired of life, and was upset that police did not shoot her. She also stated that she stole the gun from her boyfriend and went to a local bar on North Main Street prior to driving to the police department.

Officer Spencer Boisvert's Report

Officer Boisvert wrote a report on December 20, 2023. The report states in relevant part:

Officer Boisvert had just completed a shift and was sitting in the traffic division office in the north wing of the police department at 11:43 p.m. on October 5, 2023. During this time, he was not wearing his body armor or body worn camera (BWC) due to his shift being over and his

BWC being docked and downloading content from a recent arrest. He was talking to another officer when they both heard a "loud pop." He initially thought an object had fallen in the lobby to make the noise. He and Sergeant Jones walked toward the lobby to investigate. As they approached the hallway towards the north entrance, they heard two more pops. He then thought it seemed like gunfire. The report continues:

"As I turned the hallway corner, I immediately saw a white female with black hair and a black tank top in the main lobby, holding a handgun in her right hand. The female walked past the secured north wing door and window, allowing me to see this detail. I then heard additional gunfire. The female was walking in and out of the view of the doorway window to the lobby, appearing to be smoking a cigarette. Sergeant Jones took a position next to the records office door, out of view of the female, and I posted myself in a position on the corner of the north wing hallway, watching the north wing lobby door. From my vantage point of the main lobby, I could see the female as she paced around the lobby holding the handgun, walking past the door window.

"After the initial gunshots were fired and it was confirmed that the female was actively firing her handgun in the lobby, Sergeant Jones notified Bristol Police communications that gunshots were fired in the lobby. At this point, Sergeant Jones and I had our department issued firearms out of our holsters. I maintained my firearm pointed at the North Wing door window. As the woman walked back and forth in the front lobby, it was apparent that she was upset, actively yelling and distraught. She appeared to be the only one currently in the lobby, however, from my point of view, I could not confirm if there was anyone with her. Additionally, I did not know if there were any officers in the secured portion of the front desk area, which is accessed on the south side of the building.

"Based on my observations thus far, it was clear to me that the woman had been intentionally shooting her handgun in our main lobby. As this incident continued to quickly evolve, more officers began to respond to the North Wing hallway. ... Additional officers approached me from behind to assist...while I held my position on the corner of the north wing hallway. At one point, the female was observed placing the handgun down on the south side benches of the lobby and began walking around. She then picked it back up and moved out of my sight, somewhere toward the north side main lobby benches. Bristol Police Communications advised that they have the female on camera, and that they see her pointing the handgun to her head. My first thought was that she was going to shoot herself. A few seconds later, two gunshot[s] were fired by the female while she was still out of sight. Due to their [sic] being two fired shots, I suspected that the female did not actually shoot herself, but was firing more rounds into the police lobby area. The female then re-entered my field-of-view, appearing to be focused on something at the secured south side door to the south hallway. From my point of view, I was unable to see what exactly she was looking at. It was my belief at this time, that this was a targeted attack on the Bristol Police Department, and that

this female was attempting to solicit a police response in order to fatally wound and attack police department personnel.

“Due to the woman clearly displaying a danger of deadly physical force to officers and any potential citizens that could enter the main lobby of the police department, I made the decision to attempt to fire my department issued handgun at the female. This would require me shooting through the north hallway doors’ glass at the female. This decision was made in an effort to stop the active threat. Prior to engaging the female with gunfire, I asked Sergeant Jones from afar if the doorway window was bullet proof. It was my understanding that the main window of the front desk area was bullet resistant, however, from my recollection, I was never actually told or explained if the hallway doors or windows were. After not receiving a confident yes or no answer, I decided that I would proceed with firing my weapon in an attempt to stop the female.

“As soon as the woman presented herself in my view, I could not see anything in her right hand. At the same time, I could not see her left hand at all. I believed at that time that she must be holding the firearm in her left hand because she had just fired it seconds ago. I believed at that moment that the threat of imminent harm to others or myself continued, and that the woman had intended on killing or severely injuring another police officer, myself, or anybody who might appear in the lobby. I fired two shots from my handgun, aiming at the female’s torso. The rounds did not appear to have any immediate effect on the female, leaving me unsure if the bullets penetrated the doors [sic] glass. The female then stepped back away from my view through the window, walking in and out of my sight. After a brief moment of seeing the female walking around, in and out of my line of sight, I asked out loud if we still have the right female in the lobby, ensuring this was still the only person in the lobby walking around. I wanted to be sure that no one else was in the lobby that would be subjected to gunfire.”

Statement of Robert Guarino

Bristol police detectives interviewed Robert Guarino, of Plainville, who provided a sworn statement, the pertinent part of which is summarized below:

Guarino, 51, had been dating Laprise for the past year and she had recently been living in his home, along with his son and Laprise’s son. He retired from the New York City Police Department in 2012. He was allowed to keep his service weapon, a Sig Sauer P226 9mm handgun. The gun held a 15-round magazine, and he had two spare 15-round magazines. He said he regularly carried that gun concealed or kept it in a black cross-body handbag. He has two other guns he keeps in a safe that no one else can access.

On the evening of October 5th at about 9 p.m., he left the apartment and went to a nearby gas station to get Laprise a pack of cigarettes. He took the handbag with the gun and magazines with him. He then went to the liquor store to buy some beer. When he arrived back home, Laprise had an alcoholic beverage in her hand and seemed intoxicated. He placed the handbag on the stairs near the front door. The two then argued for some time. At some point, he walked out the front door to cool off. When he returned, he noticed the handbag was not near the stairs where he left it. He then noticed Laprise had left the apartment, and her car was gone. She left her cell phone behind.

Scene Survey

Detectives from the Connecticut State Police Central District Major Crime Squad arrived and processed the scene. Parked in front of the police department, they searched the car driven by Laprise, a 2018 Honda HR-V, registration AK02823. Detectives seized two items of evidence from the passenger compartment of the vehicle. One was a Sig Sauer 9mm 15-round magazine, marked "Restricted Law Enforcement Gov't Use/Or Export only." It contained 15 rounds of Luger R-P 9mm cartridges. The other item seized was a black and silver extendable baton. Detectives also located under the driver's seat a Connecticut driver's license belonging to Suzanne Laprise.

In the lobby on a seat next to where Laprise was arrested, detectives located a black handbag. Inside the bag were several items belonging to Robert Guarino, including concealed carry permits from various states and retired NYPD identification.

Detectives also took photos of the inside of the police lobby showing the bullet strikes against the windows and doors of the inner lobby and north hallway door window.



[Bristol Police Department]



[Laprise's Honda HR-V]



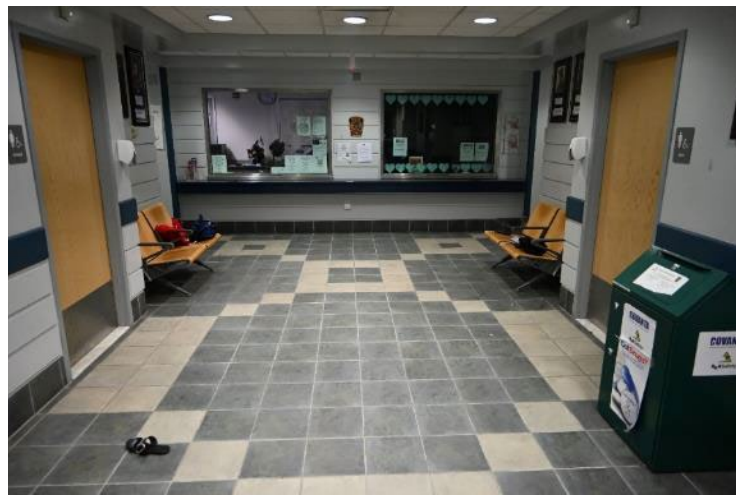
[Magazine and baton in Laprise's car]



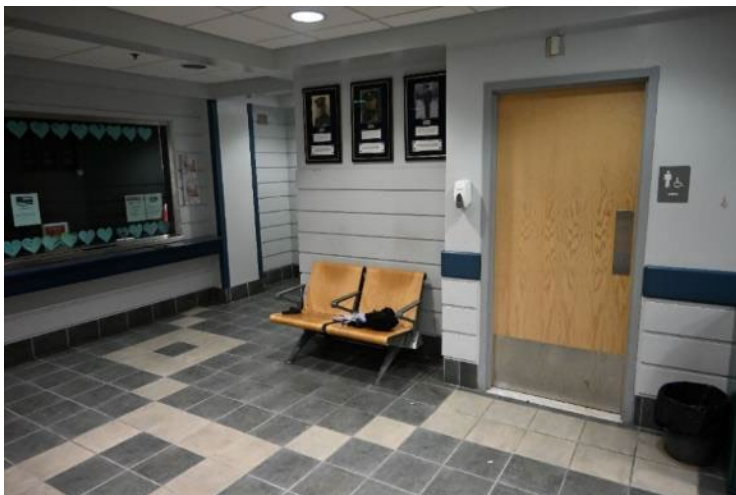
[Entrance of Bristol Police Department]



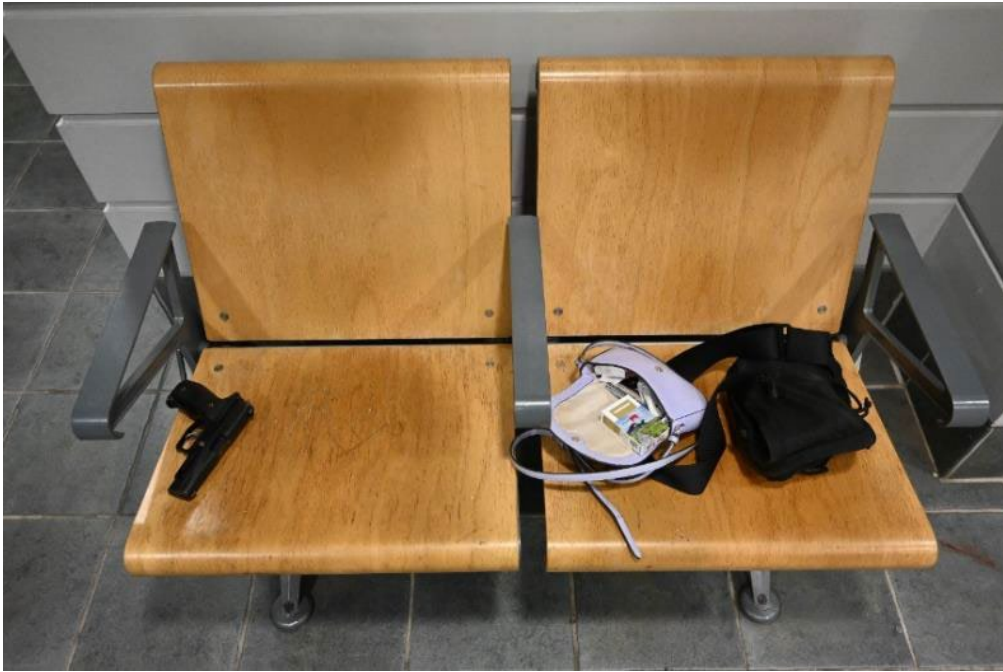
[Entrance doors to Bristol Police Department lobby]



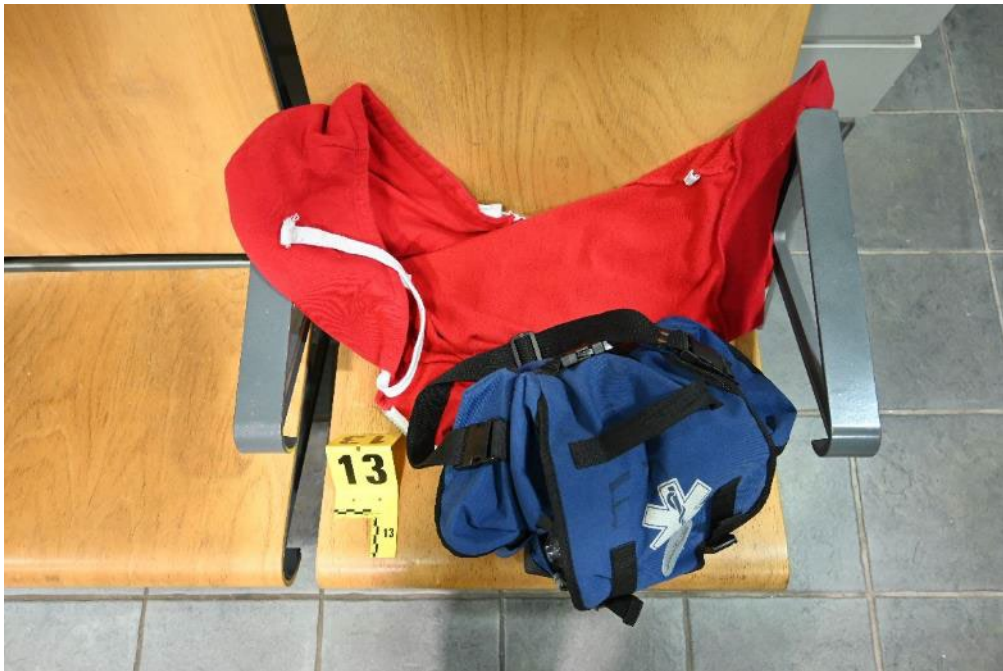
[Lobby]



[Seats in lobby by men's bathroom]



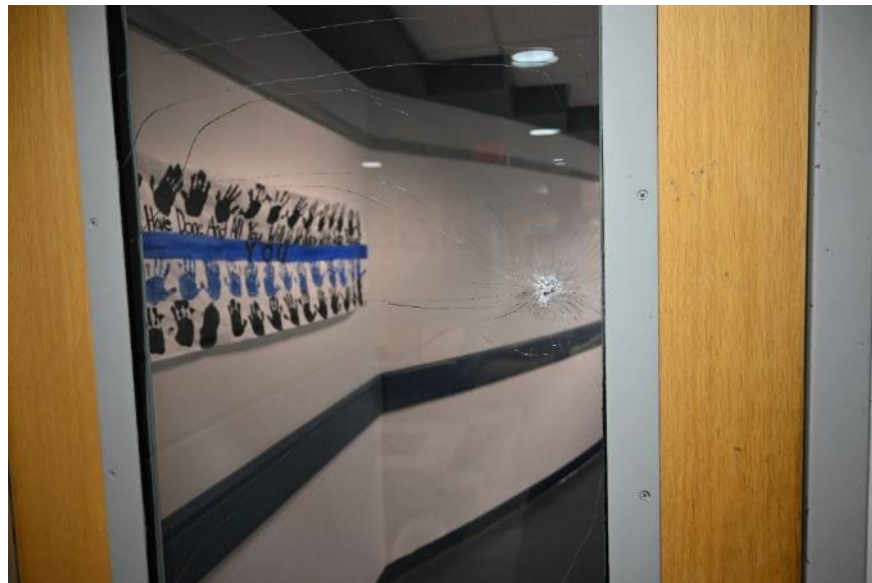
[Seats in lobby, with gun]



[Seat with Laprise's red sweatshirt]



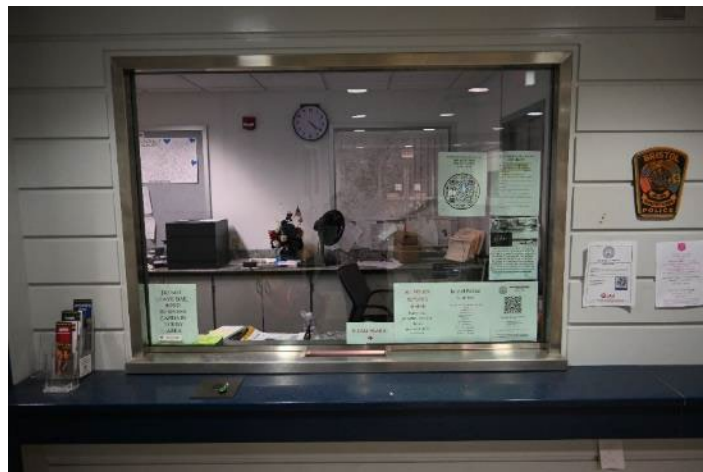
[Door to south hallway]



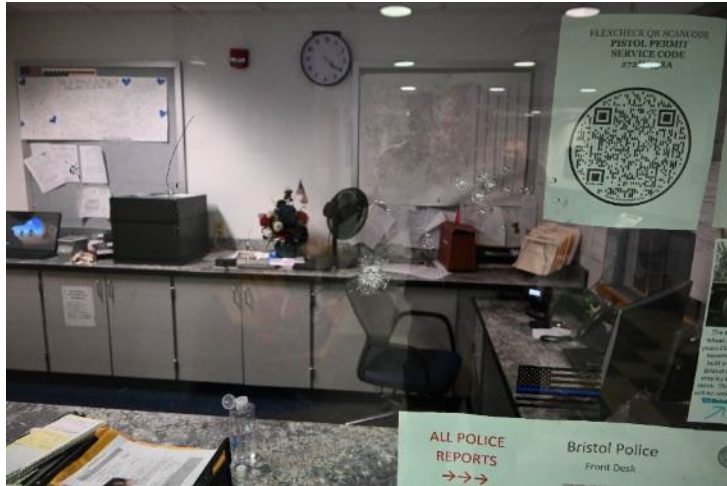
[Bullet strike in glass]



[Bullet strikes in door frame]



[Left lobby window]



[Bullet strike in lobby window]



[Bullet strike in window]



[Bullet hole in right lobby window]



[Bullet strike in north hallway door window]



[Shell casing in north hallway]



[Shell casing in north hallway]



[North door with bullet strike from inside hallway]



[Bullet hole in glass, north door]



[Bullet strike]



[Bullet strike, south door]



[Bullet strike, south door]



[Bullet strike]

Video Evidence

Video of the Lobby

The Bristol Police Department was equipped with multiple video cameras that recorded activity in the lobby. They do not capture sound. The following summarizes the relevant portions of the videos.

Laprise pulls up and parks in front of the police station at 11:35 p.m. on October 5th. About a minute later she exits the car and promptly falls flat on her face in front of the vehicle. She takes a moment, and gathers herself, and proceeds toward the entrance to the police department carrying a white purse, a black bag, and what appears to be a handgun in her right hand.

Laprise walks into the lobby at 11:38 p.m., pointing a gun at her head. She walks up to the left window and bangs on it with her hand. She then bangs the gun against the window 17 times. She paces back and forth, the bangs on the left and right lobby windows nine more times. It does not appear that any officers are behind the lobby windows at the time. She fires the gun into the south lobby door and each of the lobby windows. She puts the gun down on a chair, takes off a red sweatshirt, and takes a drag on a cigarette. She sits on the seats on the north side of the lobby and alternatively points the gun at her head and at the front windows. The south door opens slightly, and an officer is seen behind the door frame. Laprise fires two shots at the door. The door shuts. She stands up without the gun and paces in the vestibule and bangs on the front window and the door to the lavatory. Officers then rush out first the

south door, then the north door and tase her and arrest her. To see portions of the video from two angles of the lobby, click [here](#) and [here](#).



[Lobby video facing south door]

Officer Body Worn Cameras (BWC)

Many officers who were present at the police department were wearing body worn cameras that captured portions of the police response to Laprise firing a gun in the lobby. Two cameras best captured the activity in the north and south hallways leading to the lobby.

Officer Hall's BWC

Officer Hall's camera shows several officers positioned behind the south lobby door. The officers in this area are directly in the line of fire when Laprise shoots at the south lobby door. Officer Hall says, "put the gun down for me, OK?" Laprise replies, "I can't hear you." Again, Hall says, "put the gun down for me.... Put it down!"

He tells her to put her hands up on her head so that he can come talk to her. She then fires two shots. The lobby video indicates these shots are fired directly at Officer Hall and the other officers amassed at the south door. About 10 seconds later two more distant shots are heard, presumably those fired by Officer Boisvert in the north hallway. Officers then remark that she no longer is holding the gun, and they rush through the south door and tase her, causing her to fall to the ground. To see the video from Officer Hall's BWC, click [here](#).

Officer Duncan's BWC

Officer Boisvert, as he indicated in his report, was not wearing his BWC because he was coming off a patrol shift and it was downloading video from his shift. However, Officer Duncan, who was positioned behind Officer Boisvert, was wearing his camera. Beginning at 23:40:31 one hears two shots fired by Laprise. Then Officer Boisvert asks whether the door windows are bulletproof. About 12 seconds after Laprise fires, Officer Boisvert fires two shots down the hallway toward the door. A few moments later, the officers in the north hallway rush down the hall and into the lobby where Laprise has been tased. To see the video from Officer Duncan's BWC, click [here](#).

Firearm Survey

Officer Boisvert was assigned as his duty pistol a 9mm Glock, serial number BMPK856 with a 17-round magazine, which was seized at the scene by inspectors at the Office of Inspector General and turned over to state police detectives. That firearm was sent to the state Forensic Science Laboratory ("Lab") for testing, along with two Speer Luger +P cartridge casings found in the north hallway of the Bristol Police Department.

State Police detectives seized a Sig Sauer 226, serial number U707859 in the Bristol Police Department lobby on the chair next to where Laprise was arrested. It contained a 15-

round magazine containing 10 rounds with one in the chamber. Detectives found five expended Luger R-P cartridge casings in the lobby. These items were also sent to the Lab.



[Laprise's gun on bench]

The lab concluded that the five casings in the lobby all came from the Sig Sauer 226 and the two casings from the hallway came from the Glock.

Detectives submitted a firearm trace request for the Sig Sauer pistol to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and Explosives, which confirmed that the gun was originally issued in 2005 by the NYPD Police Equipment Section.



[Officer Boisvert's duty firearm]



[Laprise's firearm]

Medical Records

Inspectors obtained a search warrant for Suzanne Laprise's medical records from Bristol Hospital related to this incident. Records indicate that she told treatment providers, "I didn't want to kill myself. I wanted them to kill me."

She reported having worked for the Department of Social Services for 23 years but was currently unemployed. She was diagnosed with depressive disorder, personality disorder, alcohol abuse. Staff also noted a bruise on her head and minor injuries on her chest from the taser prong. She was discharged into the mental health unit of the jail. A blood test showed the presence of alcohol⁵ and cocaine.

Suzanne Laprise

On October 5, 2023, inspectors from the Office of Inspector General attempted to interview Suzanne Laprise at Bristol Hospital, where she was being treated and was under arrest. They were unable to speak to her due to her level of medication.

Laprise was charged with attempted murder, criminal use of a weapon, criminal mischief in the first degree, reckless endangerment in the first degree, carrying a dangerous weapon, breach of peace, carrying a pistol without a permit, carrying a dangerous weapon, and illegal possession of a large capacity magazine. She is facing the charges in New Britain Superior Court and is held on bond.

⁵ When tested at 8:07 a.m., Laprise's blood alcohol level was 200-239 mg/dl which translates to .200 - .239 BAC.

For his part, Guarino was charged with three counts of illegal possession of a large capacity magazine. Those charges are also pending in New Britain Superior Court.

FINDINGS

1. On October 5, 2023, Suzanne Laprise was an unemployed, 51-year-old woman who lived in an apartment in Plainville with her boyfriend, Robert Guarino, a 51-year-old retired New York City Police Officer. Sometime after 9 p.m., Laprise and Guarino were in the apartment together. Laprise was drinking alcohol. They got into an argument. He walked out of the apartment at one point. During that time, Laprise took a black bag that belonged to Guarino that contained a 9mm Sig Sauer handgun that was loaded with a full 15-round magazine.
2. Laprise drove her vehicle, a Honda HR-V, to Bristol Sports Bar at 369 North Main Street. She consumed more alcohol there and made comments to two people at the bar that her life was not going well and that she planned to take her boyfriend's gun to the Bristol Police Department and try to get them to shoot her. She left the bar and drove down North Main Street to the police department which was less than a mile away.
3. At 11:36 p.m., she parked in front of the police department. About a minute later, she stumbled out of the car onto the street and then walked into the main entrance to the police department with Guarino's Sig Sauer in her right hand and carrying the black bag. She entered the police department and banged on the front window with the gun several times. Police staff observing the lobby noticed this and put out a call on the radio to alert officers. Officers began assembling in the two hallways that lead to the main lobby. Laprise fired a shot at the south lobby window, which is on the left side of the lobby. She then fired a shot at the left lobby window and a shot at the right window. She put the gun down briefly to take off a red sweatshirt and take a drag from a cigarette she was smoking. She then sat on a chair and put the gun at her head.
4. Several officers took a position behind the south door and try to communicate with her. When she saw them, she fired two more shots that strike the door frame. Meanwhile Officer Spencer Boisvert was the first of several officers who had taken a position in the north hallway with a view of the north lobby door. Boisvert fired two shots at Laprise with his duty weapon, but the shots did not penetrate the bullet resistant glass of the hallway door. Laprise puts the gun down and begins yelling. Officers behind the south door rush into the lobby and fire a Taser at Laprise and take place her under arrest.
5. No person was struck by gunfire. Laprise fired a total of five shots. Officer Boisvert fired two shots. Laprise had traces of cocaine in her system and had a blood-alcohol level of at least 0.200.

LEGAL STANDARD

The use of force by a police officer is governed by General Statutes §53a-22. The version of that statute in effect on August 12, 2023, in relevant part, provides:

“(a)(1) For purposes of this section, a reasonable belief that a person has committed an offense means a reasonable belief in facts or circumstances which if true would in law constitute an offense. If the believed facts or circumstances would not in law constitute an offense, an erroneous though not unreasonable belief that the law is otherwise does not render justifiable the use of force to make an arrest or prevent an escape from custody.

(2) A peace officer ... who is effecting an arrest pursuant to a warrant or preventing an escape from custody is justified in using the physical force prescribed in subsections (b), (c), and (d) of this section unless such warrant is invalid and known by such officer to be invalid.

(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, 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 in a civil rights case: “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

Under Connecticut law as applicable here, a determination as to whether a police officer’s use of deadly force was objectively reasonable 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.

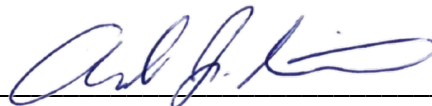
In this case, Suzanne Laprise opened fire on the police department and constituted a clear and deadly threat to officers and members of the public as soon as she entered the lobby. Two of her five shots were fired directly at police officers who responded to the initial gunfire. Officer Boisvert fired 12 seconds after those shots. This was a reasonable decision given the deadly threat Laprise presented. Another reasonable police officer would have acted in the same way to prevent a threat to a third party, in this case a fellow officer.

Regarding the additional analysis required of the officer's conduct, Laprise possessed a deadly weapon. De-escalation measures were attempted by another officer, but they were unsuccessful. Finally, Officer Boisvert's own actions in no way created a situation triggering the use of deadly force.

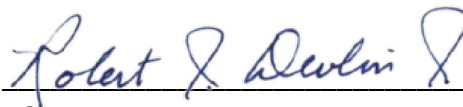
CONCLUSION

The investigation establishes that Officer Boisvert's use of deadly force was reasonable to defend a third person. I therefore conclude that his use of force was justified under Connecticut law. The Office of Inspector General will take no further action on this matter.

Submitted, this 31st day of October 2024.



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ROBERT J. DEVLIN, JR.
INSPECTOR GENERAL