

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

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Attorney General*



**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT  
November 15, 2024**

**Incident Type:** Officer Involved Shooting  
**Incident Location:** Bristol Police Department, Bristol, RI  
**Incident Date:** October 12, 2023  
**Police Department:** Bristol Police Department  
**Involved Officers:** Sgt. Paul Medeiros

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Office of Attorney General has concluded its review of the officer-involved shooting incident at the Bristol Police Department at 395 Metacom Avenue, Bristol, Rhode Island on October 12, 2023. The officer involved in the shooting is Sgt. Paul Medeiros of the Bristol Police Department. The investigation was conducted pursuant to the Attorney General's Protocol for the Review of Incidents Involving the Use of Deadly Force, Excessive Force, and Custodial Deaths ("The Attorney General Protocol"), together with the Rhode Island State Police and the Bristol Police Department. Based on this review, we conclude that the actions of Sgt. Medeiros were legally justified.

A thorough account of the investigation may be found in the Rhode Island State Police Report of Investigation and attachments thereto. As detailed in those reports, Civilian 1 and Civilian 2, students at Roger Williams University, were parked in a Nissan Rogue at Colt State Park in Bristol. At approximately 8:45 p.m., Mark Rinn (born 1984) pulled up alongside their vehicle in a Toyota Camry. He was not wearing a shirt, and he made some hand gestures to the women from his vehicle. The women found Rinn's behavior odd, so they drove out of the park without acknowledging him. As they pulled out of the park, Rinn followed. Alarmed by Rinn's behavior, the women drove directly to the Bristol Police station with Rinn still trailing their vehicle.

They pulled into the Bristol Police parking lot as Rinn pulled up alongside the driver's side of their Nissan. They alerted Civilian 3 to Rinn's behavior as she was parked in her vehicle waiting for her husband, retired Bristol Police Captain James Annis, who was inside the station. Civilian 3 immediately called her husband who responded to the parking lot with Sgt. Medeiros. As captured on Bristol Police surveillance video, Medeiros attempted to address Rinn through the passenger side window of his vehicle. Rinn abruptly backed his Camry up, nearly striking Annis, despite verbal commands from Sgt. Medeiros to stop the car. Rinn then put the car in drive and rammed the rear bumper of the Nissan forcing the vehicle into the wall of the police station. Medeiros was positioned in front of Rinn's vehicle with his firearm drawn and had to jump out of the way to avoid being struck. Rinn again backed up his vehicle and prepared to strike the Nissan a second time. As Rinn drove toward the Nissan, Sgt. Medeiros fired one shot at Rinn just before his vehicle violently crashed into the women's car. Undaunted even after being shot, Rinn again backed up his vehicle before putting it in drive and ramming into the women's car a third time. As the Camry approached the Nissan for the third time, Sgt. Medeiros fired a second shot at Rinn which disabled him and ended the encounter.

Sgt. Medeiros immediately called for additional police to respond as well as rescue. Rinn was taken to the hospital, treated for two gunshot wounds and eventually released from their care.<sup>1</sup>

Surveillance video from multiple angles, which will be more thoroughly described below, captures the rapidly-evolving incident in full. Despite both verbal commands and the presence of a uniformed police officer with his firearm drawn, Mr. Rinn repeatedly rammed his car into the Nissan endangering the lives of the two occupants, as well as the lives of a retired officer and Sgt. Medeiros who were adjacent to the vehicles. As Mr. Rinn's actions constituted an imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury, it was objectively reasonable for Sgt. Medeiros to use deadly force to confront that threat in defense of his life and the lives of the others who were

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<sup>1</sup> Through counsel, Mr. Rinn chose not to make his medical records available for the preparation of this report.

present. This Report focuses only on the facts most pertinent to our conclusion that the deadly force used by the officer was objectively reasonable and necessary under the circumstances.

## **EVIDENCE REVIEWED**

### **State Police Reports**

1. State Police Investigation Report (55 pages)
2. State Police Incident Report (6 pages)
3. State Police Forensic Services Unit Report (16 pages)

### **Bristol Police Reports**

1. Bristol Police Incident Report (3 pages)
2. Bristol Police Arrest Report (3 pages)
3. Lieutenant Steven St. Pierre Narrative (2 pages)
4. Officer Joshua Roza Supplemental Narrative (1 page)
5. Officer Rachael Gaffney Supplemental Narrative (2 pages)
6. Officer Russel Wood Supplemental Narrative (3 pages)
7. Officer Russel Wood Summary of Civilian 1 Interview (1 page)
8. Officer Russel Wood Summary of Civilian 2 Interview (1 page)
9. Officer Russel Wood Summary of Civilian 3 Interview (1 page)
10. Bristol Police Dispatch Log (2 pages)

### **Recorded Statements and Transcripts**

1. Sergeant Paul Medeiros – Bristol Police Department
2. Officer Rachael Gaffney – Bristol Police Department
3. Officer Joshua Roza – Bristol Police Department
4. Officer Russel Wood – Bristol Police Department
5. Captain James Annis – Bristol Police Department (retired)
6. Lieutenant Joshua Rocha – Bristol Fire Department
7. EMT Richard Rensehausen – Bristol Fire Department
8. EMT Scott Marino – Bristol Fire Department
9. Stephanie Lee Austin – Paramedic Systems Inc. for Bristol EMS
10. Madison Capizzano - Paramedic Systems Inc. for Bristol EMS
11. Civilian 1
12. Civilian 2
13. Civilian 3
14. Civilian 4
15. Civilian 5

### **Videos/Recordings**

1. Bristol Police Department Surveillance – 5 views
2. Body Worn Camera with Evidence Audit Trail for Officer Joshua Roza
3. Body Worn Camera with Evidence Audit Trail for Officer Russel Wood
4. Body Worn Camera (2) with Evidence Audit Trail for Rachael Gaffney
5. Bristol Police Dispatch Recordings

### **Additional Items Reviewed**

1. State Police Search Warrant for 2021 Gray Toyota Camry (12 pages)
2. State Police Search Warrant for Mark Rinn Blood Sample (6 pages)
3. State Police Forensic Services Unit Scene/Evidence Photos (271 photos)

4. State Police Evidence Submission Report (1 page)
5. Bristol Police Use of Force Policy (13 pages)
6. Bristol Police Body Worn Camera Policy (16 pages)
7. Sergeant Paul Medeiros' Firearm Qualifications (1 page)
8. E-911 Records Response (1 page)
9. RI Department of Health Toxicology Results for Mark Rinn (7 pages)
10. Bristol Fire Department EMS Patient Care Report (19 pages)
11. Rehoboth Police Incident Report (4 pages)
12. RISCL Evidence Examination Report (4 pages)
13. RISCL NIBIN Examination Report (2 pages)

### **SUMMARY OF THE FACTS**

On Thursday, October 12, 2023, Civilian 1 and Civilian 2, students at Roger Williams University, were parked in a Nissan Rogue at Colt State Park in Bristol. At approximately 8:45 p.m., a male who was unknown to them pulled up alongside their car in a Toyota Camry. The male, later identified as Mark Rinn, was not wearing a shirt and made some "wild frantic" hand gestures toward the women. Rinn's behavior made the young women concerned enough that they drove out of the parking lot without engaging him.

As the women drove out of Colt State Park, they "immediately knew something was wrong because [Rinn] kept up at the same pace." Civilian 1 turned down "random" streets in an effort to confirm that Rinn was indeed following them. With each turn, Rinn took a corresponding turn and at times he flashed his bright lights to get their attention. Through text messages, a friend suggested the women drive directly to the Bristol Police Station which is what they did. They turned onto Metacom Avenue and then turned left into the Bristol Police south parking lot. Surveillance video from the station captures their Nissan Rogue entering the station at 8:58 p.m. with Rinn's Camry directly behind it.

Civilian 3 was parked in the lot waiting for her husband, a retired captain with the Bristol Police, when Civilians 1 and 2 pulled in and parked immediately to her left. Civilian 3 noticed the two young women were yelling and trying to get her attention. She rolled down her window as they frantically yelled, "Can you help us? Help us please. This guy is following us." As Civilian 3 saw Rinn's Toyota pull into the parking space next to them, she advised them to lock the doors and close the windows. She then called her husband and asked him to come out to the south lot with a police officer. While waiting for the police response, Civilian 3 saw Rinn climb into the back seat of the Camry. Less than one minute later, surveillance video shows Sgt. Paul Medeiros and Civilian 3's husband, James Annis, exit the station through different doors.

Sgt. Medeiros and James Annis were inside the police station when Civilian 3 called. Medeiros was the officer in charge. He was at his desk doing administrative paperwork when he heard Annis' phone ring and his wife yelling into the phone, "Hurry up. This girl is out here. Some guy is following them." Annis exited the building first and entered the south parking lot through the open garage door. From left to right, he saw his wife's car, the Nissan Rogue and Rinn's Camry in a line facing the garage doors. Annis approached Rinn's vehicle and noticed that he was completely naked, hugging a dog in the back seat of the Camry. Medeiros arrived at Rinn's car seconds later. Annis and Medeiros yelled commands for Rinn to stop the car, but Rinn ignored them and climbed from the back seat into the driver's seat.

Sgt. Medeiros stood in front of the cars and instructed Civilian 1 to back up her car. Civilian 1 reversed her Nissan Rogue about a car length and stopped. Annis approached the

driver's side door and began speaking with Civilian 1. Meanwhile, Sgt. Medeiros tried to address Rinn from the front passenger side window of the Camry, but he was met with "No reaction at all" from Rinn. Rinn then abruptly reversed his car, pinning Medeiros against the Nissan and nearly striking Annis with the rear bumper. Medeiros drew his firearm and stood approximately six feet in front of Rinn's Camry. Civilian 1 saw Sgt. Medeiros draw his firearm, so she drove her vehicle forward up closer to the garage doors where it was originally parked to avoid being struck by potential gunfire.

Rinn then accelerated toward the Nissan and Sgt. Medeiros. Medeiros was positioned to the right front of Rinn's vehicle. The surveillance video clearly shows Rinn drive at Sgt. Medeiros which forced him to run out of the way. A fraction of a second later, Rinn slammed his car into the rear of the Nissan for the first time. Upon impact, the Rogue was thrust into the police station wall near the garage door. Medeiros continued to yell commands for Rinn to stop the car but to no effect. Rinn immediately reversed away from the Rogue about one car length. Medeiros again positioned himself in front of, and to the left of, the Camry. With his firearm pointed at Rinn, Medeiros yelled for him to stop and radioed for additional officers to respond to the south lot. As Rinn sped his Camry into the rear bumper of the Nissan a second time, Medeiros fired one round through the front windshield at Rinn. The round struck Rinn but had no effect. The impact of the crash compressed the Nissan further into the wall of the police station.

Rinn reversed his vehicle again. This time, he backed up farther than the previous two times and struck a police vehicle with his rear bumper while doing so. At this point, Sgt. Medeiros stood in a similar position in front of the Camry but to the left of Rinn. Rinn accelerated a third time towards Civilian 1 and 2. As the Camry barreled into the Nissan, Sgt. Medeiros fired a second shot at Rinn through the windshield, hitting Rinn a second time. Following the third collision, Rinn was immobilized, and the Camry did not move. The entire confrontation, which was captured on multiple surveillance cameras<sup>2</sup>, lasted approximately one minute from the time Annis and Sgt. Medeiros came in contact with Rinn.

Medeiros checked on the women in the Nissan who were "hugging each other inside the car." The sergeant and Officer Gaffney then approached Rinn. The driver's side door was locked so Gaffney broke the window and opened the door. Rinn was breathing but not responsive. Medeiros noticed two gunshot wounds: one in his left eye and a second in his right shoulder. Officers administered medical aid to Rinn before rescue arrived and transported him to Rhode Island Hospital.

The two occupants of the Rogue were severely shaken up by the incident but neither one had physical injuries that required medical treatment. The Nissan Rogue had extensive damage to the rear of the vehicle as well as the front as it was forced into the building with each successive strike. Rinn's Camry suffered significant damage to the front of the vehicle and some scratches to the rear bumper.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of this incident, all Bristol Police officers were equipped with body-worn cameras. Pursuant to the rules and regulations governing body-worn cameras, Sgt. Medeiros was not wearing a body-worn camera during this confrontation because he was assigned as the desk sergeant doing administrative duties. Bristol Police Department Body Worn Camera Policy, General Order No. 300.03, Section XI(B)(6).

## LEGAL ANALYSIS

### Applicable Law

When considering a police officer's actions which involve the use of force in his/her capacity as a peace officer a two-part analysis is required. First, it must be determined if the officer's use of force in arresting or detaining the suspect was necessary and reasonable. If an officer's conduct is found to be necessary and reasonable, then the inquiry ends, and no criminal charges will stem from the incident. If, however, it is determined that the use of force was not necessary and not reasonable then an inquiry must be made as to whether the use of force meets the elements of the applicable criminal statute(s). In this case, as we find that the conduct of the Bristol Police officer who used deadly force was objectively reasonable, we do not engage in the second prong of the analysis.

The Fourth Amendment protects "[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." A "seizure" of a "person," can take the form of "physical force" or a "show of authority" that "in some way restrain[s] the liberty" of the person. Terry v. Ohio, 392 U.S. 1, 19 n.16 (1968). An arrest or seizure of a person carries with it the right of police officers to use some degree of force. Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989). "All claims that law enforcement officers have used excessive force – deadly or not – in the course of an arrest ... or other 'seizure' of a free citizen should be analyzed under the Fourth Amendment and its 'reasonableness' standard...." Graham, 490 U.S. at 395; Tennessee v. Garner, 471 U.S. 1 (1985).

The Fourth Amendment instructs that the *degree* of force law enforcement officers are permitted to use must be "objectively reasonable" under the totality of circumstances. Id. at 8-9. Relevant facts include "the severity of the crime at issue, whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others, and whether he is actively resisting or attempting to evade arrest by flight." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396. The reasonableness of an officer's use of force "must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396. The Supreme Court has held that the determination of reasonableness must allow "for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgements – in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving – about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396-97. Critically, the reasonableness inquiry is an objective, not a subjective, one. The "question is whether the officers' actions are "objectively reasonable" in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motivation." Id. (emphasis added).

Applying these principles, Rhode Island law provides that "A police officer may use force dangerous to human life to make a lawful arrest for committing or attempting to commit a felony, whenever he or she reasonably believes that force dangerous to human life is necessary to effect the arrest and that the person to be arrested is aware that a peace officer is attempting to arrest him or her." R.I. Gen. Laws § 12-7-9. The Use of Force Policies of the Bristol Police Department (General Order 390.10 ) apply the legal principles set forth above. They provide that an officer is authorized to use lethal force to:

1. Protect him/herself, another officer, or another person(s) when the officer has an objectively reasonable belief that an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury exists to himself/herself, another officer or another person(s).

2. To prevent the escape of a fleeing subject when the officer has probable cause to believe that the person has committed, or intends to commit, a felony involving serious bodily injury or death, and the officer reasonably believes that there is an imminent risk of serious bodily injury or death to the officer or another if the subject is not immediately apprehended.<sup>3</sup>

### Analysis

Applying the principles set forth above to the evidence obtained through the joint investigation, we conclude that Sgt. Medeiros' use of force was reasonable and necessary under the circumstances. The video surveillance clearly shows that Sgt. Medeiros had limited options during this encounter. Mr. Rinn did not acknowledge, let alone comply with his orders to stop the vehicle. He did not react to Sgt. Medeiros' display of a firearm. He was not deterred by the fact that he was in the parking lot of the Bristol Police Department. Instead, Mr. Rinn slammed his vehicle into the occupied Nissan Rogue on three occasions and hit Sgt. Medeiros and nearly hit Retired Captain Annis in the process.

As Rinn first accelerated at both Medeiros and the Rogue, Medeiros would have been justified in firing his weapon to meet the deadly force threat on himself and the occupants of the Rogue, but he withheld his fire as he ran to avoid being struck. Rinn then slammed his vehicle into the Rogue with such force that it thrust the vehicle into the wall of the department's garage. In their statements to police, both occupants of the vehicle stated that they feared for their lives as their car was violently jolted with each strike.

It was only as Rinn accelerated a second time towards the Rogue that Medeiros first fired his weapon aiming through the windshield at Rinn. At this point, Rinn had already demonstrated a willingness and ability to seriously injure those around him. In addition to striking Medeiros and nearly striking Annis, he rammed his vehicle into the occupied Rogue. Sgt. Medeiros reasonably believed that Rinn had to be stopped by force and the best available option to him was his firearm. Rinn, however, was undaunted by the gunfire as he reversed and accelerated for a third time at the Rogue. Medeiros fired again in reasonable fear that "he was gonna kill" the women in the Rogue. This second shot brought the incident to an end. Since only two shots were fired during the incident and Rinn was struck twice, a reasonable inference can be made that Rinn was hit by Medeiros' first shot but it did not immobilize him, which necessitated the second shot.

Before concluding, we pause briefly to address Mr. Rinn's state of mind and its impact on our analysis. The evidence suggests that Mr. Rinn was likely experiencing a mental health crisis that night, as suggested by his erratic behavior as well as the fact that he was naked in his car. But while Mr. Rinn's state of mind may be relevant to any criminal proceedings in which he is a defendant, it does not change our assessment of the reasonableness of Sgt. Medeiros' actions. Mr. Rinn's conduct posed a serious and imminent risk of injury or death to those around him whether he fully appreciated the nature of his actions or was in full possession of his faculties or not.

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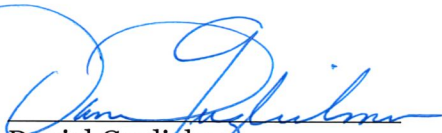
<sup>3</sup> Bristol Police Department, General Order No. 390.10, Section IV(B)

Conclusion

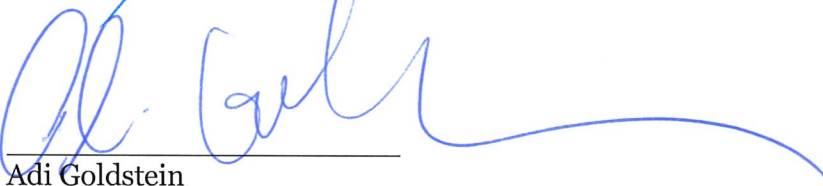
It is clear from a thorough review of the evidence compiled through this joint investigation that Sgt. Medeiros' use of deadly force was objectively reasonable and legally justified. Mr. Rinn created an incredibly dangerous situation for both the officer and the civilians with whom he came in contact. The "rapidly evolving" circumstances requiring "split-second judgements" that confronted Sgt. Medeiros were just the sort described by the Supreme Court in its Graham decision. Sgt. Medeiros only discharged his firearm when it was clear that Mr. Rinn would not obey his command to stop the vehicle and rammed into another occupied vehicle, twice, which presented a serious and imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury not only to the occupants of that vehicle but to Sgt. Medeiros and Retired Captain Annis. Sgt. Medeiros' use of force was in direct response to that threat.

This matter is therefore closed.

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