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DEADLY FORCE REVIEW PANEL

6 STATE HOUSE STATION · AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

December 3, 2024

The Hon. Anne M. Carney, Senate Chair
The Hon. Matthew W. Moonen, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

The Deadly Force Review Panel completed its 39th examination of a law enforcement officer's use of deadly force. Under Title 5, section 200(K)(7), "within 30 days of the conclusion of the examination of the use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer . . . the panel shall submit a report on the panel's activities, conclusions, and recommendations about the incident to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over judiciary matters." The report is enclosed.

The Panel examined the September 10, 2023, incident in Deer Isle, the details of which are part of the Panel's enclosed report.

For the Deadly Force Review Panel:

Fernand Larochelle, Chair
Stephen Burlock, Vice Chair

Enclosure

#39 – Deer Isle

Deadly Force Review Panel - Consideration of an incident in Deer Isle on September 10, 2023, during which Sgt. Travis Frost and Deputy Zachary Allen of the Hancock County Sheriff's Office discharged their weapons at Aaron Bulger.

On September 10, 2023, Hancock County deputy sheriffs went to Deer Isle to arrest Aaron Bulger on a warrant charging burglary. Mr. Bulger resisted, assaulted a deputy, and evaded three Taser deployments. Mr. Bulger fled, and deputies and a police canine pursued him to an adjoining residence. Mr. Bulger ran up an exterior staircase onto a deck at the residence's rear. When the pursuing canine latched onto Mr. Bulger's clothing, Mr. Bulger lifted the canine by its throat and threw it down the stairs at the pursuing officers. Mr. Bulger then fled across the deck and shattered a glass sliding door that led into a living area of the residence. Two deputies shot at Mr. Bulger, fearing that occupants of the residence would be in jeopardy if Mr. Bulger entered their residence. A total of five shots were fired, but none of them struck Mr. Bulger. Mr. Bulger entered the residence. The State Police Tactical Team responded. After a six-hour standoff, Mr. Bulger was taken into custody.

The statute (Title 5, § 200-K) governing the Panel's authority states that the Panel "shall examine deaths or serious injuries resulting from the use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer." In this incident, although the law enforcement officers used deadly force, no death or serious injury resulted from their actions. Accordingly, the Panel declined to review this incident as it was not within its statutory authority to do so.