



Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

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August 6, 2025

Director Roger Rogoff
Washington State Office of Independent Investigations
P.O. Box 40270
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Use of deadly force against Mr. Alecandro Castaneda¹

Associated Case Numbers:

Lewis County Prosecutor's Office: 041-0128006
Office of Independent Investigations: OII-2025-0001
Centralia Police Department: 25A00354
Lewis County Sheriff's Office: 25C505/25C4971
Chehalis Police Department: 25B220
Lewis County Coroner's Office: 25-0013
Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory: 725-000018

Director Rogoff:

On January 12, 2025, within the city limits of Centralia, Washington, Officer Ruben Ramirez used deadly force which resulted in the death of Alecandro Castaneda. The matter was investigated by the Office of Independent Investigations. As you know, Lewis County is part of Region I and is the first region to be investigated under the Office of Independent Investigations (OII). Created in 2021, the Office was to begin investigations no later than July 1, 2022.² However, investigations did not begin until December 2024.

Pursuant to statute, the investigation is to be completed within 120 days.³ That did not occur here. On day 121, OII was contacted to determine why the investigation had not been completed. According to OII, the delay was caused by the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab and testing they were conducting. It was estimated at that time, the testing would be done mid-June 2025. A final, undated report was received by this Office on July 18, 2025.⁴ Subsequent to that, OII provided all video, audio, transcripts, reports, and photographs associated with the investigation. Many of the items

¹ As a preliminary matter, upon receiving the report from OII and all of the evidence, the materials were placed into this Office's record management system, PbK. The documents and photographs were then Bates Stamped for ease of reference. The bottom of each page and each photograph has a unique stamp. Each page is labeled as: OIS CENTRALIA 2025. After that initial label, each page is numbered. For example, OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 002379 refers to page 2379. There were approximately 8000 pages/photographs marked.

² RCW 43.102.030(1)(a).

³ RCW 43.102.080(8).

⁴ CENTRALIA 2025 / 000001 to CENTRALIA 2025 / 000086.

It is the Mission of the Lewis County Prosecutor's Office to zealously seek justice in all criminal matters, consistently promote public confidence in the legal system, and diligently represent county government while adhering to the highest ethical and moral standards.

provided were duplicates. The materials provided were reviewed prior to the drafting of this document. Where possible, specific citations to the record will be provided. It should be noted that a reference may appear in more than one place in the record, but each appearance will not be cited herein.

APPLICABLE LAW

The use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer is governed in Washington by RCW 9A.16.040 and RCW 10.120.020. RCW 9A.16.040 states:

(1) Homicide or the use of deadly force is justifiable in the following cases: ...

(b) When necessarily used by a peace officer meeting the good faith standard of this section to overcome actual resistance to the execution of the legal process, mandate, or order of a court or officer, or in the discharge of a legal duty; or

(c) When necessarily used by a peace officer meeting the good faith standard of this section or person acting under the officer's command and in the officer's aid:

(i) To arrest or apprehend a person who the officer reasonably believes has committed, has attempted to commit, is committing, or is attempting to commit a felony; ...

(2) In considering whether to use deadly force under subsection (1)(c) of this section, to arrest or apprehend any person for the commission of any crime, the peace officer must have probable cause to believe that the suspect, if not apprehended, poses a threat of serious physical harm to the officer or a threat of serious physical harm to others. Among the circumstances which may be considered by peace officers as a "threat of serious physical harm" are the following:

(a) The suspect threatens a peace officer with a weapon or displays a weapon in a manner that could reasonably be construed as threatening; or

(b) There is probable cause to believe that the suspect has committed any crime involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical harm.

Under these circumstances deadly force may also be used if necessary to prevent escape from the officer, where, if feasible, some warning is given, provided the officer meets the good faith standard of this section....

(4) A peace officer shall not be held criminally liable for using deadly force in good faith, where "good faith" is an objective standard which shall consider all the facts, circumstances, and information known to the officer at the time to determine whether a similarly situated reasonable officer would have believed that the use of deadly force was necessary to prevent death or serious physical harm to the officer or another individual.

(5) This section shall not be construed as:

(a) Affecting the permissible use of force by a person acting under the authority of RCW 9A.16.020 or 9A.16.050; or

(b) Preventing a law enforcement agency from adopting standards pertaining to its use of deadly force that are more restrictive than this section.

RCW 10.120.020 also addresses the use of deadly force by law enforcement:

(2) DEADLY FORCE. Except as otherwise provided under this section, a peace officer may use deadly force against another person only when necessary to protect against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death to the officer or another person. For purposes of this subsection: "Immediate threat of serious physical injury or death" means that, based on the totality of the circumstances, it is objectively reasonable to believe that a person has the present and apparent ability, opportunity, and intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person.

RCW 10.120.020(2).

ANALYSIS

GOOD FAITH

As outlined in RCW 9A.16.040(4), "good faith" looks at "all the facts, circumstances, and information **known to the officer at the time.**"⁵ By definition, the review of the use of deadly force must be constrained in scope. As a result, much of the information provided by the OII, while potentially relevant under other circumstances, is immaterial to the review, analysis, and the ultimate conclusions reached here. For instance, the history of Mr. Castaneda's mental health, prior interaction with police, or toxicology report can have no bearing on the decision to use deadly force and has no bearing on the analysis and conclusions reached here.

⁵ See RCW 9A.16.040(4); emphasis added.

"Good faith" is an objective standard that shall consider all the facts, circumstances, and information known to the officer at the time to determine whether a similarly situated reasonable officer would have believed that the use of deadly force was necessary to prevent death or serious physical harm to the officer or another individual."⁶ If it is determined an officer acted in "good faith," the use of deadly force is justified under RCW 9A.16.040.

Based upon the reports, statements, records, and video, it is known that at approximately 10:55 a.m. on January 12, 2025, Jaydah Baron, who was pregnant at the time, called 911 to report that her boyfriend, Alecandro Castaneda, had become violent, breaking multiple doors in the residence and pushing her down multiple times. At times, the statements of Ms. Baron to 911 were difficult to understand because a male voice is heard yelling in the background and there is significant noise which Ms. Baron attributed to Mr. Castaneda punching doors in the house.

Officer Ruben Ramirez⁷ was dispatched at approximately 10:57 a.m., arriving at approximately 10:59 a.m.⁸ Officer Ramirez then entered the apartment to make contact with Mr. Castaneda.⁹ Contact is made while Mr. Castaneda is in, what was later identified as, his room.¹⁰ Officer Ramirez's Body Worn Camera (BWC) shows some of the damage that was attributed to Mr. Castaneda's outburst by Ms. Baron to 911. Attempts by Officer Ramirez to get Mr. Castaneda out of the room and out of the residence were not successful.

Officer Ramirez was described by Ms. Baron as coming "in there like a dad...." and being surprised by Mr. Castaneda's actions.¹¹ Although both Officer Ramirez and Ms. Baron attempted to get Mr. Castaneda to comply with the request to exit,¹² Mr. Castaneda refused to comply. Ms. Baron described Mr. Castaneda as having a "smirk on his face. Like he was not gonna [sic] kind of like stop freaking out."¹³ In fact, it does appear as though Mr. Castaneda was smirking at the Officer's commands.¹⁴ Originally, Officer Ramirez attempted to have Mr. Castaneda exit the residence to talk, he then told Mr. Castaneda he was under arrest.¹⁵

⁶ See RCW 9A.16.040(4).

⁷ Officer Ramirez has since retired but will be referred in this document by his position at the time of the event. According to a statement by Officer Ramirez, this was a planned retirement as he referred to only having nine (9) shifts left. OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 000018.

⁸ According to Officer Ramirez's BWC, he exited his vehicle at 10:59:26 a.m.

⁹ According to Officer Ramirez's BWC, he enters the residence at 10:59:36 a.m.

¹⁰ According to Officer Ramirez's BWC, he makes contact at 10:59:46 a.m.

¹¹ OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 002207.

¹² OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 002170.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:02 a.m.

¹⁵ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:00 a.m.

Mr. Castaneda refused to exit and, instead, retreated further into the room.¹⁶ It appears Officer Ramirez attempted to turn on the light in the room, but was unsuccessful.¹⁷ According to Ms. Baron, Mr. Castaneda threw a large speaker, striking the light switch before police arrived.¹⁸ As a result, the room where the encounter occurred was poorly lit.

After retreating further into the room, Mr. Castaneda backed into a corner and was on top of the bed in the room.¹⁹ Officer Ramirez pulled his Taser and ordered Mr. Castaneda to the ground.²⁰ Mr. Castaneda refused and appeared to assault Officer Ramirez.²¹ The pair struggled and ended up on the ground.²² The deployment of Officer Ramirez's Taser appeared to have little to no effect.²³ During the struggle, Officer Ramirez ended up on the floor.²⁴ The drywall was damaged during the struggle.²⁵ Mr. Castaneda, during the struggle had Officer Ramirez in a headlock and attempted to disarm Officer Ramirez.²⁶ During the struggle, Officer Ramirez's gun fell to the ground.²⁷ After retrieving the firearm, Officer Ramirez fired two shots.²⁸ Mr. Castaneda was struck once in the upper left leg and once in the right upper chest.

All evidence provided indicates that Mr. Castaneda started the encounter that led to his death. The events leading up to Ms. Baron contacting the police are well documented on the 911 call and were reaffirmed in the multiple interviews of Ms. Baron. Dispatch was contacted, Mr. Castaneda caused damage to property, had physically assaulted Mr. Baron multiple times in a short period of time, refused law enforcement commands, and then attacked a law enforcement officer.

Based upon the totality of the circumstances, Officer Ramirez acted in good faith when he used deadly force resulting in the death of Mr. Castaneda. Officer Ramirez attempted to deescalate the situation. First, through officer presence. When that failed, Officer Ramirez used verbal commands. After that was unsuccessful, Officer Ramirez attempted to arrest Mr. Castaneda. Mr. Castaneda opted to ignore all of these attempts. Officer Ramirez then attempted a less-lethal option of deploying his Taser. That was ineffective and Mr. Castaneda chose to physically assault Officer Ramirez. Not only did Mr. Castaneda chose to assault Officer Ramirez, he also attempted to disarm Officer Ramirez.

¹⁶ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:08 a.m.

¹⁷ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 10:59:52 a.m.

¹⁸ OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 002379.

¹⁹ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:09 a.m.

²⁰ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:13 a.m.

²¹ See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:19 a.m.

²² See Officer Ramirez's BWC 10:59:46 to 11:00:19 to 11:00:35 a.m.

²³ Id.

²⁴ Id.

²⁵ OIS CENTRALIA 2025 / 000032 to 000033.

²⁶ See Sgt. Finch's BWC 11:02:22 to 11:02:35 a.m.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ Id.

NECESSARY

Deadly force was necessary in this matter. The actions of Mr. Castaneda made it clear he had no interest in a peaceful resolution. RCW 10.120.020, authorizes the use of "deadly force against another person only when necessary to protect against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death to the officer or another person."²⁹ As referenced earlier, Mr. Castaneda's actions showed he was "an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death." Given that multiple attempts to deescalate the situation had failed, and that Mr. Castaneda continued to increase his level of violence, the use of deadly force was necessary and reasonable.

CONCLUSION

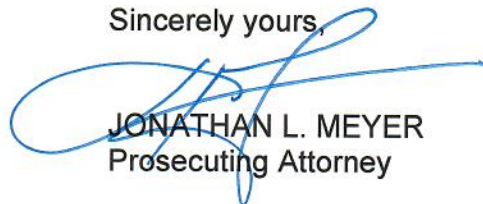
What could have very easily ended in a simple charge of malicious mischief domestic violence and assault in the fourth-degree domestic violence instead ended in the death of Mr. Castaneda. That was a result of Mr. Castaneda's actions, no one else. His actions necessitated the use of deadly force. Although unclear why Mr. Castaneda chose to act as he did, it is clear that Officer Ramirez was left with no choice but to employ deadly force.

Had Mr. Castaneda survived the shooting, he would have been charged with multiple felony and non-felony counts. Those charges would have likely included malicious mischief-domestic violence (potentially a felony charge dependent on the amount of damages), assault in the fourth degree-domestic violence, assault in the third degree (law enforcement officer), and disarming a law enforcement officer.

It does not appear any additional reports are forthcoming. However, if received they will be reviewed. If the new information necessitates additional clarification, this report may be modified. This Office authorizes the release of evidence being held on this matter.

If you have any questions, or wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact this Office.

Sincerely yours,



JONATHAN L. MEYER
Prosecuting Attorney

JLM:bsh

cc: Chief Andy Caldwell, Centralia Police Department

²⁹ RCW 10.120.020(2).