Death Investigation of
Jack Thrasher

Valley Independent Investigation Team
Des Moines Police Department 23-0488

King County Prosecuting Attorney
Public Integrity Team

Published: May 9, 2025

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION 4
1. Purpose of the Memorandum 4
2. Scope of the Memorandum 4
3. Status of the Independent Investigation 5
II. INVESTIGATION SUMMARY 5
III. LEGAL STANDARD AND APPLICABLE LAW 8

LEESA MANION (she/her)
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

King County

Office of the Prosecuting Attorney
CRIMINAL DIVISION
W554 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104
(206) 296-9000

DECLINE MEMORANDUM

Death Investigation

Jack Thrasher

This memorandum has been approved by the King County Prosecuting Attorney to be published on the website of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office Public Integrity Team.[1]

WARNING – This memorandum contains images and descriptions of violence that may be offensive and disturbing to some readers. The images and descriptions are included to provide the reader with the most accurate information regarding the topic of this memorandum.

[1] https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/pao/about-king-county/about-pao/team-leadership/organizational-structure/criminal/mainstream/public-integrity-team

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Memorandum

Pursuant to the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act, an independent investigation must be completed when the use of deadly force by a peace officer results in death, substantial bodily harm, or great bodily harm.[2] The independent investigation is conducted in the same manner as a criminal investigation and must be completely independent of the involved agency.[3] The King County Prosecuting Attorney is mandated by law to review such incidents regarding police use of force and to determine if the action was justified or if there was a criminal action such that criminal charges should be filed.[4] The KCPAO, based on its duty to represent the State of Washington, may also review incidents that fall outside the required mandate to determine whether a crime occurred.[5]

2. Scope of the Memorandum

The KCPAO's determination if the police action was justified or if there was a criminal action such that criminal charges should be filed is based entirely on the investigation materials provided to the KCPAO, relevant criminal laws, rules of evidence governing criminal proceedings, the applicable burden of proof, and the KCPAO's Filing and Disposition Standards. This determination is not intended to address matters outside the scope of this memorandum including, but not limited to, an administrative action by the involved agency, any civil action, or any inquiry, or other proceeding. The KCPAO expresses no opinion regarding the propriety or likely outcome of any such actions. Other topics relevant to matters outside the scope of this memorandum, such as department policy, procedures, or training, are included and reviewed to the extent those topics are relevant to assessing whether the police action was justified or if there was a criminal action such that criminal charges should be filed.

---

[2] RCW 10.114.011. See also WAC 139-12-010.

[3] WAC 139-12-010.

[4] Except as required by federal consent decree, federal settlement agreement, or federal court order, where the use of deadly force by a peace officer results in death, substantial bodily harm, or great bodily harm, an independent investigation must be completed to inform any determination of whether the use of deadly force met the good faith standard and satisfied other applicable laws and policies. RCW 10.114.011. Similarly, if the Office of Independent Investigation is the lead investigation agency, the prosecutorial entity must review the investigation. RCW 43.102.020. 2021 c 318 § 101.

[5] RCW 36.27.020(4).

3. Status of the Independent Investigation

After a thorough review of the independent investigation and applicable laws, the Public Integrity Team (Team), assigned to the Special Operations Unit of the KCPAO, has determined the investigation into this matter is complete.

II. INVESTIGATION SUMMARY

On February 20, 2023, Auburn Police Department (APD) officers were dispatched to investigate a domestic assault that occurred at 3625 Juniper Court SE in Auburn. After investigating, officers developed probable cause to arrest Jack Thrasher (Thrasher) for Assault in the Fourth Degree – Domestic Violence. The officers learned that after the assault, Thrasher left the residence and entered a shuttle van, which was parked outside the residence. Officers confirmed that the van was registered to Thrasher and they were told that Thrasher had a rifle inside the van.

APD officers used a loudspeaker to call Thrasher out of the van so that they could place him under arrest because this crime required a mandatory arrest.[6] Thrasher did not comply with the officers' commands or respond to them. Officers used a less lethal launcher to partially break the van's windows and deployed pepper balls to force Thrasher to exit the van, but he did not comply. Another officer also deployed a noise flash diversionary device near the van, but Thrasher did not exit.

While the less lethal weapons were used, officers heard loud bangs from inside the van. At one point, officers heard thumping and moaning noises coming from inside the van. Next, they observed Thrasher sit down on the front driver's seat, Thrasher opened the door, and he announced that he had been shot. Thrasher's body slumped down and officers observed blood on his hands. APD officers provided first aid to Thrasher but he was pronounced deceased.

Officers looked inside the van to ensure that no one else was inside. They observed that Thrasher had been the only occupant inside the van and there was a shotgun lying on the floor of the van. Officers observed what appeared to be a shotgun wound to Thrasher's chest. It was reported that no APD officers discharged their firearms during the incident. Additionally, when reviewing the body worn video from this incident, the Team confirmed that no officer discharged

[6] RCW 10.99.030.

their firearm. Further, the Team noted the following while reviewing the body worn video:

Time	**Action**
10:45 pm	• APD officers established that there was probable cause to arrest Thrasher for Assault in the Fourth Degree – Domestic Violence.
10:49 pm	• APD officers learned there was a rifle inside the shuttle van.
10:52 pm	• An APD officer notified the other officers about the rifle. • Officers moved their vehicles around the van. The officers wore uniforms that were marked "Police" and they were clearly identifiable as law enforcement officers. The officers' vehicles also had "Police" markings, including overhead emergency lights illuminated. • Officers verbally yelled to Thrasher that he was under arrest. Officers notified Thrasher they may release their K9. • Officers made repeated commands for Thrasher to exit the van, that he was under arrest, and to show the officers his hands. The commands were loud, clear, and concise. Although multiple officers made commands, the officers did not speak over each other. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
10:53 pm – 11:01pm	• Officers continued to issue similar commands to Thrasher using the public address system. They intermittently chirped their police siren. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:01 pm	• Officers noted they heard "scuffling" inside the van.
11:03 pm	• Officers warned Thrasher they would break the window if he did not exit the shuttle van. They warned him they would deploy a pepper ball inside the vehicle. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:04 pm	• An officer broke the window and deployed the pepper balls. • Officers announced they could see Thrasher moving and they could not see his hands. • Officers made additional commands for Thrasher to exit the shuttle van. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:06 pm	• Officers announced that Thrasher was covered in blood. • Medics were requested to stage nearby. • Officers made additional commands for Thrasher to exit the shuttle van. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:09 pm	• Officers made additional commands for Thrasher to exit the shuttle van and informed him that medics were nearby to give him aid. Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:13 pm	• An officer deployed a noise flash diversionary device near the van, but Thrasher did not exit. • Officers made additional commands for Thrasher to exit the shuttle van.

	Thrasher did not respond or comply.
11:22 pm	• Officers observed Thrasher exiting the shuttle van. Thrasher said he had been shot and officers asked him where he was shot. Officers gave him instructions on how to exit.
11:23 pm	• Officers observed that Thrasher was not responding and appeared injured. They approached him and began first aid.

The Valley Independent Investigation Team was requested to respond to the scene. Investigators received permission to search for evidence inside the van pursuant to a search warrant. Investigators entered the van and examined the shotgun. They noted that the shotgun was lying near a bench seat in the middle of the van and there was a pool of blood on the floor between the shotgun and the front seats of the van. They also observed, what appeared to be, blood spatter on the barrel near the muzzle, along the front sight, near the top of the loading tube, and all the way back to the shotgun's action housing. A discharged shotgun shell was also collected. Investigators opined that it appeared Thrasher had shot himself while he was facing the back of the van and the pellets exited his body towards the front of the van, striking several objects.

The King County Medical Examiner's Office performed an autopsy of Thrasher to determine the cause and manner of death. The cause of death is a term used to indicate *what* specific injury or disease led to death. The manner of death is a term used to categorize *how* the injury or disease led to death. Manner of death is categorized into one of five categories:

- *Accident* is defined as a death other than natural, where there is no evidence of intent.
- *Homicide* is defined as a death due to intentionally inflicted harm of one person by another. It is also defined as the killing of one person by another.[7] Thus, the term homicide as used in an autopsy report refers to the mechanism of death and does not refer to legal terms, such as murder or manslaughter, which do include a determination legal liability or culpability.
- *Natural* is defined as a death solely by organic disease. If natural death is hastened by injury, such as a fall, the manner of deal will not be considered natural.
- *Pending* is a temporary designation used when additional

[7] HOMICIDE, Black's Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019).

investigation, information, or test results are required to determine the cause or manner of death.

- *Suicide* is defined as a death as the result of a purposeful action, with intent to end one's life.
- *Undetermined* is defined as a death when there is insufficient evidence or information to assign to accident, homicide, suicide, or natural categories, or when two plausible manners are equally likely.

The King County Medical Examiner's Office opined the cause of death was a shotgun wound of the torso sustained during a police encounter. All evidence indicated that the wound was self-inflicted. The manner of death was certified as suicide.

III. LEGAL STANDARD AND APPLICABLE LAW

There is no indication that any officer used deadly force during the incident. Therefore, the mandatory requirements of the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act are not applicable.

In a criminal prosecution, the State must prove each element of a criminal charge by competent evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.[8] The KCPAO will file charges if sufficient admissible evidence exists, which, when considered with the most plausible, reasonably foreseeable defenses that could be raised under the evidence, would justify conviction by a reasonable and objective factfinder.[9] In addition, the State must disprove the existence of a defense that negates an element of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.[10] Prosecution should not be declined because of an affirmative defense unless the affirmative defense is of such nature that, if established, would result in a complete defense for the accused and there is no substantial evidence to refute the affirmative defense.[11]

There is no probable cause to believe that any officer committed a crime during this incident. The use of force upon or toward the person of another is not unlawful whenever necessarily used by a public officer in the performance of a legal duty.[12] An officer's use of force

[8] RCW 9A.04.100; WPIC 4.01.
[9] KCPAO Filing and Disposition Standards.
[10] WPIC 14.00.
[11] KCPAO Filing and Disposition Standards.
[12] RCW 9A.16.020(3); WPIC 17.02.

is lawful when used necessarily to effect an arrest.[13] In the current incident, APD officers possessed probable cause to believe that Thrasher committed a domestic violence offense. Under Washington law, when a peace officer responds to a domestic violence call and has probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed, the peace officer shall exercise their arrest powers.[14]

In addition to information about the assault, APD officers also received information that Thrasher was inside the van and had a firearm in his possession. Given this information, it would have been dangerous for officers to attempt to physically remove Thrasher from the vehicle. The officers attempted to compel Thrasher to exit the van by communicating with him through a loudspeaker, but he did not reply. Officers used less lethal ammunition to compel Thrasher to exit, but he did not exit. Thrasher sustained a gunshot wound inside the van, which appears to be self-inflicted by Thrasher.

Therefore, based on the anticipated admissible evidence and testimony, which is corroborated by video evidence, there is no evidence to prove that any APD officer committed a crime during this incident.

[13] RCW 10.120.020(1)(b).
[14] RCW 10.99.030(2)(a).