

MEMORANDUM

The Newport News Commonwealth Attorney's Office has completed its review of all evidence provided regarding shots fired on June 15, 2024, in the area of 1100 Jebbs Place, Newport News, VA., resulting in the death of Monae Kathleen Bonaparte. Virginia Law requires us to analyze the facts surrounding an officer's use of deadly force through the eyes of the officer involved.¹ Therefore, we examine this incident by considering what the officer knew in the moments leading up to the shooting, and whether it was reasonable for the officer who discharged his firearm to believe that there was an imminent threat of serious bodily harm to himself or others.

STATEMENT OF FACTS²

On June 15, 2024, Newport News dispatch received several calls just after 2:20 a.m. of a female running through the parking lot of Jebbs Place in the City of Newport News, breaking windows and discharging a firearm. Other 911 calls reported someone trying to gain entry into their apartment and shots fired. Dispatchers could hear the gunshots in the background of the 911 calls. Officer Cameron also reported hearing three gunshots as he arrived on scene. Cameron exited his vehicle and retrieved his police rifle. Cameron heard a single gunshot and observed a female, later identified as Monae Kathleen Bonaparte, near the bushes in front of 1170 Jebbs Place between two apartments. Bushes obstructed the views of Officers D'Amico and

¹ Couture v. Commonwealth, 656 S.E. 2d 425, 427 (Va. App. 2008).

² This is an abbreviated summary of the facts. "What was said and done before this imminent danger may be relevant background, but it is not dispositive on the question of self-defense" or defense of others. Colas v. Tyree, 882 S.E.2d 625, 634 (2023). The Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney determined the facts based on a review of police interviews with witnesses and law enforcement, crime scene reports, 911-call transcripts, the autopsy report for Ms. Bonaparte, certificate of analysis and police body camera footage.

Williams who had also arrived on scene, but from Officer Cameron's vantage point, he could see a black firearm in Ms. Bonaparte's right hand. Cameron gave several commands for her to drop the firearm and come away from the bush. Cameron saw Bonaparte drop the firearm into a nearby bush and step forward, but she was hesitant to come toward the police. Bonaparte was shouting incoherently, and continuously screaming for help. She asked officers to call her mother, and then called dispatch herself making the following statements:

"Tell her I busted people's windows...no one would help me...no one will let me in..."

"I'm about to shoot somebody. We're gonna die."

"Call her now...if I don't hear it I'm just gonna go out shooting..."

"If you transfer me I'm gonna kill myself. I'm gonna take one of them and I'm gonna kill myself..." (Officer Polk also recalled hearing this statement from Ms. Bonaparte.)

"I'm about to shoot him. Stop."

Bonaparte continued to move back and forth in the area of the bushes. Cameron repositioned for a better viewpoint to see her hands as Officer D'Amico continued to try to talk to Bonaparte. Cameron explained that he had briefly looked away from the sight on his rifle to adjust his eyes, and when he looked back, the barrel of Bonaparte's gun was coming toward him. Cameron fired. Bonaparte had been hit, but still had the firearm as she rotated and moved toward the porch of the residence. Cameron fired twice more. Bonaparte retreated into the bush where officers could not see her hands. After a moment, officers made the decision to go in to render aid until medics arrived. Bonaparte was taken to Riverside Hospital and pronounced deceased at approximately 3:20am. Officer Polk recovered a black Sig firearm from the bush where Bonaparte had been.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

When a police officer has probable cause to believe that a suspect poses a threat of serious physical harm to others, he may use deadly force to prevent that harm. Couture v. Commonwealth, 656 S.E. 2d 425, 427 (Va. App. 2008). An officer’s use of deadly force is justified when he perceives an imminent threat of serious bodily harm to himself or others. Lynn v. Commonwealth, 499 S.E.2d 1, 9 (Va. App. 1998); Couture, 656 S.E.2d at 427. *See also* Colas v. Tyree, 882 S.E.2d 625.³ Therefore, we analyze the circumstance by considering what Officer Cameron would have reasonably believed in the moments just prior to discharging his firearm.

On June 15, 2024, Newport News police officers responded to a call where a female had been attempting to enter residences, was breaking windows and discharging a firearm in the Stuart Gardens Apartments around 2:20 am. Monae Kathleen Bonaparte was acting erratically and was in possession of a black firearm as seen by Officer Cameron who had a long rifle with a scope. After initially dropping the firearm at the command of the police, Ms. Bonaparte ultimately retreated into bush where the firearm had been thrown and failed to comply with command to come out from the bush. At 2:38 a.m., Officer Cameron saw the barrel of Bonaparte’s firearm coming towards him and fired, hitting Bonaparte. Bonaparte turned and moved toward the residence of 1170 Jebbs Place. Knowing that Bonaparte had already tried to forcefully enter residences and had fired shots in the apartment complex earlier, Cameron quickly fired twice more. Officers treated Bonaparte until medics arrived, and recovered a black Sig firearm from the bush where Bonaparte had retreated.

³ In Virginia, self-defense includes both subjective and objective components. The defense of others “is commensurate with self-defense.”

Based on these facts, it is clear that Ms. Bonaparte posed an imminent threat of serious harm to Officer Cameron, other NNPD Officers and to the citizens living in the Stuart Gardens Apartments. Therefore, Officer Cameron's use of deadly force in the fatal shooting of Ms. Bonaparte was justified by the facts and the law. No further action will be taken by this Office in this matter.