



# ALASKA STATE TROOPERS and FAIRBANKS POLICE



## PRESS BRIEFING UPDATE

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**INCIDENT:** Officer Involved Shooting-Alaska State Troopers-Fairbanks Police  
Lazelle Road

The Alaska State Troopers and Fairbanks Police Department held a Press Briefing Wednesday, October 10, 2018 at 1:00 pm in reference to the December 24, 2017 Officer Involved Shooting. The briefing will be held at the Fairbanks Police Department.

The briefing was aired via Facebook Live on the Fairbanks Police Department Facebook page.

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Fairbanks Police Department Police Chief Eric Jewkes presented.

I want to take a moment and thank you for coming and your patience in getting this information to you. Sometimes it seems like a very long time to investigate. I believe we have worked diligently in being open and honest about these types of events. Any time there is police action and a life is lost we know the ripple effect can impact the entire community.

We understand the family’s pain and what they are going through with this event. We know that Cody was a young man that had a whole life in front of him, that people loved him and were willing to help him. We know his death has been painful and it is very hard to deal with.

Both the Alaska State Troopers and the Fairbanks Police understand the value of life. Our officers go out every day, doing what they can, to help and protect this community. On the evening of December 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, that is what they were going out to do.

These officers are on the front lines of emotional crisis every day. The Fairbanks Police Department alone is on track to respond to 384 suicidal subject calls in 2018. These are preliminary numbers. The Alaska State Troopers add an additional 503 across the state in 2017. On the evening of this incident, Officer Sweet was already assisting a subject who had significant injuries from a suicide attempt. After loading this person into an ambulance, he left directly from the back of an ambulance to responded to assist in this event. Both Officers Sweet and Larimer have been through Crisis Intervention training, Trooper Johnson is a trained crisis negotiator.

On this evening officers were confronted with significant challenges. It was 7:00 p.m. and dark. It was -25 below zero. Cody was walking on the Steese Expressway (a major roadway) and then toward the main city neighborhood of Shannon Park and Lazelle Estates. Cody would not stop walking, listen or respond in any meaningful way. He was distraught and it appears he may have been struggling with it for some time.

He had a gun and was under the influence of alcohol and marijuana.

Officers followed and negotiated with Cody for 11 minutes while walking with him for nearly ½ mile.

During this 11 minutes they called out to Cody approximately 78 times saying things like: Drop the gun, you have to stop walking/moving, don't do it Cody, let's talk and other affirmative attempts to get him help. Several of the officers are veterans and they tried to make that veteran connection with him.

During this 11 minute, ½ mile incident, the officers put themselves in harm's way to protect the public and try to help Cody. They willingly accepted the risk to themselves, knowing that at any point Cody could turn and shoot them. They took on that risk to try to end this peacefully, their hope was that Cody would respond to one of those 78 attempts and simply put the gun down. They did this standing in the middle of the street with no cover.

Risks vary in these situations and the incident ended when the risk became too great. When Cody turned at them, pointed the gun at them and specifically screamed that that they could die right now, the risk became too great and they were forced to act.

A map showing the path that Cody led officers was presented

Trooper E. Johnson's is the first officer to make contact with Cody and the audio begins there. Trooper E. Johnson's audio is played uninterrupted through the entire incident. On screen you will see video from Officer Larimer's car, Officer Sweet's car, and Officer Larimer's body camera.

The video will go to black after the first shots out of respect to the family and the officers. The audio will continue as there have been questions regarding the two volleys.

The audio and video were played.

This outcome is not what these officers were after. We know that suicide in Alaska is nearly double the national average. I want to take a moment and ask the people who may be watching this, please reach out to those who you think might be struggling. Life can be hard and we all need a little help sometimes. At some point we all need help. Please have that conversation that might be difficult, because it may just make a difference in someone's life.

Thank you again coming. We will try to answer any questions.

QUESTIONS (not a verbatim transcript):

Why were there two volleys?

Chief Jewkes: The officers are trained to stop the threat. Cody proclaimed the intent to kill the officers and he had the gun pointed to them. Several of the officers stated that that he still had the gun and still believed he was a threat. That use of force and justification did not stop after the first volley.

What could have been done differently?

Captain Wall: In this situation, the officers acted professional and protected the residential area. There was nothing that the officers could have done to change the outcome. Cody had the opportunity to change the outcome. Had he put the gun down one of the 78 times, the outcome would have been different.

The shot that killed him was on the backside of his head, how do you explain that?

Chief Jewkes: In a dynamic, rapidly evolving event. It involves motion and limited visibility. The poor lighting, the temperature, your breath reflects the flashing lights, among other things can impact what is happening. I can turn my head and do lots of different things with my body that's an action faster than you can react to that.

Why did it take so long to present this to the public?

Chief Jewkes: This event is complex and involves two agencies. The Alaska State Troopers handled the investigation. The job of a law enforcement officer is the only job that where you are expected to do your job and when you do, you are the subject of a criminal investigation. Criminal investigations take time and then these incidents are sent to the Office of Special Prosecution which is a stand alone agency. The ruling was given two weeks ago, so I believe this has been a timely presentation.

At the state level, can anything be done to speed up the investigation?

Chief Jewkes: Any investigation takes time. I would rather that it be right than fast.

Captain Wall: In these instances, it is a criminal investigation, it is also a homicide investigation. And while a homicide investigation must be done, the Office of Special Prosecution must go through each officers statements and actions along with the entire investigation. Everyone wants to get the information out there in the most compassionate manner.

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