



# **INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION**

**Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in  
Prince George's County on April 20, 2025**

**September 16, 2025**

*Public Release: September 23, 2025*

## **Declination Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death of Aevon Bucknor, Jr. on April 20, 2025**

The Independent Investigations Division of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (the “IID”) is charged with investigating “police-involved incidents that result in the death of individuals or injuries likely to result in death.”<sup>1</sup> If the Attorney General determines that the investigation provides sufficient grounds for prosecution, then the IID “shall have exclusive authority to prosecute the offense.”<sup>2</sup>

### **I. Introduction**

On April 20, 2025, at approximately 10:15 a.m., officers with the Prince George’s County Police Department (“PGPD”) responded to the 100 block of St. George Blvd. in Oxon Hill, Maryland, after receiving a 911 call for a report of a shooting or cutting at that location. While en route, officers were informed that the person they were looking for may have been involved in a stabbing and arson that occurred earlier that morning. Upon arriving on scene, the officers encountered an adult male, later identified as Aevon Bucknor, Jr., who was holding a knife. The officers gave Mr. Bucknor verbal commands to drop the weapon, but Mr. Bucknor did not comply and advanced toward one of the officers with the knife. As that officer backed away from Mr. Bucknor, both officers discharged their service weapons, striking Mr. Bucknor. Mr. Bucknor remained standing, turned, and walked several feet away from the officers, then lay down on the ground and dropped the knife. Officers provided medical aid until emergency medical services (“EMS”) arrived on scene and transported Mr. Bucknor to an area hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

After completing its investigation and evaluating all the available evidence, the Office of the Attorney General has determined that the subject officers did not commit a crime under Maryland law. Accordingly, the Attorney General has declined to prosecute any of the subject officers in this case.

The IID’s investigation focused exclusively on potential criminal culpability relating to the subject officers’ conduct. By statute, the IID only has jurisdiction to investigate the actions of police officers, not those of any other individuals involved in the incident. Moreover, the IID’s analysis does not consider issues of civil liability or the department’s administrative review of the subject officers’ conduct. Compelled statements by subject officers may be considered in civil or administrative processes but may not be considered in criminal investigations or prosecutions due to the subject officers’ Fifth Amendment rights. If any compelled statements exist in this case, the IID has not considered them in this investigation.

This report is composed of a factual narrative followed by a legal analysis. Every fact in the narrative is supported by evidence obtained during this investigation, including an autopsy report, police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and EMS reports, body-worn camera footage, dashboard and surveillance camera footage, photographs, department policy, and

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<sup>1</sup> Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-602 (c)(1).

<sup>2</sup> Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-604 (a)(1).

interviews with civilian and law enforcement witnesses. The subject officers in this case chose not to make statements to the IID, which had no impact on the prosecutorial decision.

The legal analysis explains why the IID will not bring charges under the relevant Maryland statutes.

This investigation involved one decedent and two subject officers:

- A. The decedent, Aevon Roy Bucknor, Jr., was 44 years old at the time of the incident. He was a Black male who lived in Oxon Hill, Maryland.
- B. Corporal Phillip Johnson has been employed by PGPD since September 2006. He is a Black male, and at the time of the incident, he was 56 years old.
- C. Lieutenant James Martinez has been employed by PGPD since October 2013. He is a White male, and at the time of this incident, he was 32 years old.

The IID reviewed all available departmental disciplinary records and criminal histories of these involved parties and where they existed, determined that none were relevant to the legal analysis.

## **II. Factual Summary**

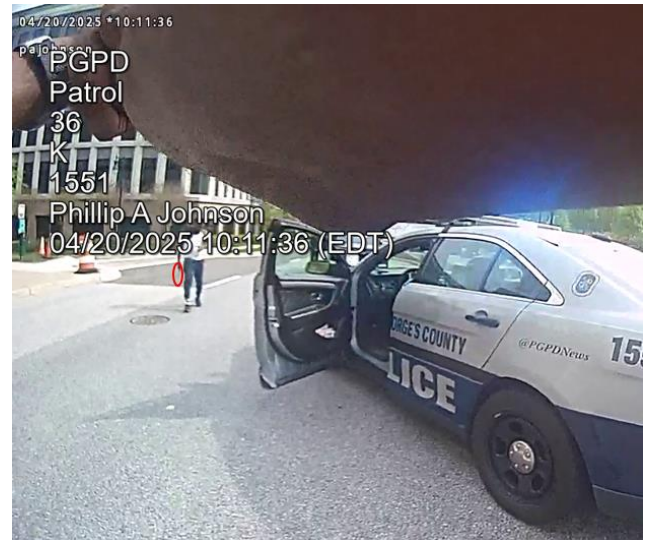
On April 20, 2025, at around 8:20 a.m., Prince George's County 911 received reports of two stabbing victims linked to an apartment fire at an apartment complex in the 8300 block Indian Head Highway in Fort Washington, Maryland. Emergency responders, including Prince George's County Fire Department and PGPD officers, arrived on the scene. Cpl. Phillip Johnson and Lt. James Martinez were two of the responding officers. Aevon Bucknor, Jr., was identified by one of the victims as the attacker. Both victims were transported to local hospitals for treatment of critical injuries, and a countywide alert was issued for Mr. Bucknor.

At approximately 10:04 a.m., the subject officers responded to multiple 911 calls for service in the 100 block of Riverhaven Drive in Oxon Hill, Maryland. One 911 caller reported hearing yelling, possible gunshots, and seeing blood in multiple locations in an apartment building. Another caller reported two people fighting on the sidewalk and that one may have been cut. While the subject officers were on their way to the scene, dispatch advised that the Riverhaven Drive call for service may be linked to the stabbing because it was near Mr. Bucknor's address.

At approximately 10:11 a.m., as the subject officers arrived near the Riverhaven Drive location, they observed Mr. Bucknor holding a knife standing near the intersection of St. George Blvd. and Potomac Passage. The subject officers exited their patrol cruisers, drew their service weapons, and ordered Mr. Bucknor to drop his weapon.

For the next ten seconds, both subject officers continued to yell for Mr. Bucknor to drop his weapon. During that time, Mr. Bucknor walked toward Lt. Martinez, made a slight lunge with the knife, briefly paused, and after Lt. Martinez backed away, Mr. Bucknor changed direction and

began walking toward Cpl. Johnson. Cpl. Johnson backed away as the subject officers continued to command Mr. Bucknor to drop the knife. Mr. Bucknor continued moving toward Cpl. Johnson with the knife in his hand.



**Images 1 & 2:** Still images from the body-worn cameras of the subject officers.

**Left Photo:** Image from Lt. Martinez's body-worn camera that shows Mr. Bucknor beginning to lunge toward Lt. Martinez.

**Right Photo:** Image from Cpl. Johnson's body-worn camera footage that shows Mr. Bucknor moving toward Cpl. Johnson, with the knife circled in red.

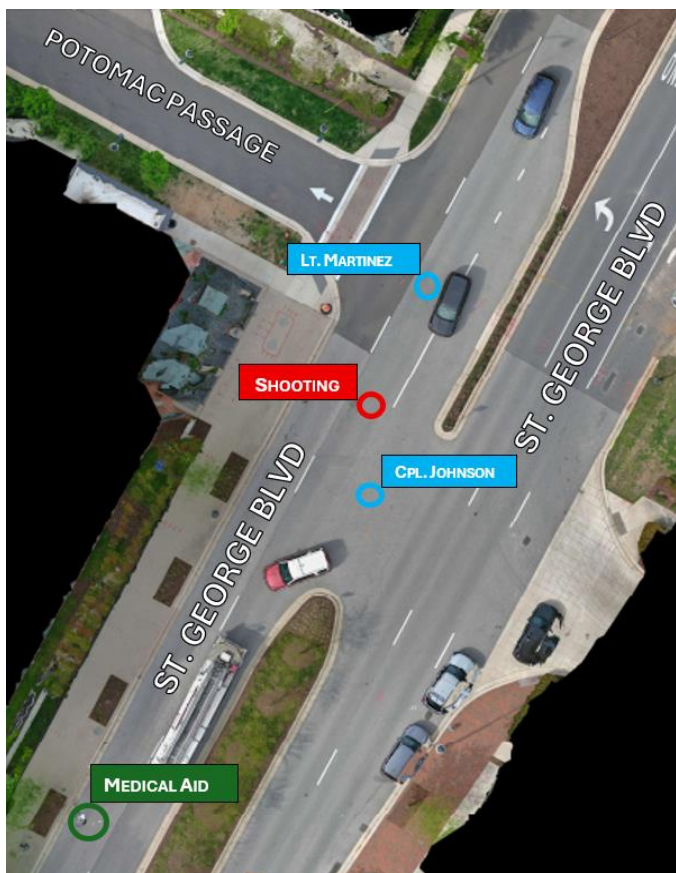


**Image 3:** An on-scene photograph taken by the Maryland State Police (MSP) of the knife dropped by Mr. Bucknor. As shown, the knife is covered in blood, and the blade is approximately 8 inches long.



As Mr. Bucknor began closing the distance between himself and Cpl. Johnson, both subject officers fired their service weapons multiple times. After Mr. Bucknor was struck once in the chest, he turned and walked away from both subject officers. After traveling approximately 160 feet, Mr. Bucknor dropped to his knees, dropped the knife, and rolled onto his back. Once Mr. Bucknor was on his back, the subject officers and several other responding officers approached Mr. Bucknor and rendered medical aid.

Cpl. Johnson advised dispatchers that Mr. Bucknor was the suspect from Fort Washington scene. Approximately six minutes after the shooting, EMS arrived and Mr. Bucknor was transported to a local hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.



*Image 4:* An aerial photograph of the scene taken by MSP, reflecting Mr. Bucknor's (red) and the subject officers' (blue) approximate positions at the time of the shooting, and the post-shooting location of Mr. Bucknor at the time he was treated (green).

### III. Supplemental Information

#### A. Autopsy

On April 21, 2025, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (the "OCME") performed an autopsy on Mr. Bucknor. The Medical Examiner determined that a gunshot wound caused Mr. Bucknor's death and determined that the manner of death was "Homicide."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Bucknor suffered one gunshot wound under his right clavicle bone that entered his chest cavity and punctured his lung.

There was no evidence of soot deposition or gunpowder stippling on the wound, meaning that Mr. Bucknor was not shot at close range.

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<sup>3</sup> Manner of death is a classification used to define whether a death is from intentional causes, unintentional causes, natural causes, or undetermined causes. The OCME uses five categories of manner of death: natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. "Homicide" applies when death results from a volitional act committed by another person to cause fear, harm, or death. This term is not considered a legal determination; rather, they are largely used to assist in the collection of public health statistics. *A Guide for Manner of Death Classification*, First Edition, National Association of Medical Examiners, February 2002.

Toxicology testing results showed that Mr. Bucknor's blood alcohol content was .26 percent.

## **B. Department Policy**

PGPD has written policy that provides regulations and guidance for their officers, including that which addresses the use of force and the use of deadly force. Under the PGPD General Order Manual Vol. II, Chapter 58, "[o]fficers are permitted to use only the amount of force that is necessary and proportional, under the totality of the circumstances, to effectuate a legitimate law enforcement objective...and, in the case of lethal force, protect themselves and others from an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury." However, "when time, circumstances and safety allow, officers shall take steps to gain compliance and de-escalate conflict without using physical force." Even so, PGPD officers are told that they "must maintain tactical advantage" throughout an incident, taking into account "that high-risk incidents are fluid and continually changing." Further, "[a]n officer should look for indicators of imminent assault."

According to the policy, an officer is justified in using deadly force to make an arrest only when all other means of apprehension are unreasonable given the circumstances and:

- 1) the arrest is for a felony crime of violence which may include the threat or use of lethal force;
- 2) the suspect poses an immediate threat to the officer or another person; and
- 3) the force employed does not create a substantial risk of injury to other persons.

## **IV. Legal Analysis**

After a criminal investigation, prosecutors must determine whether to bring criminal charges against a person to hold them accountable pursuant to Maryland law. When making that determination, prosecutors have a legal and ethical duty to charge a person with a crime only when they can meet the State's burden of proof; that is, when the available evidence can prove each element of that crime beyond a reasonable doubt. Prosecutors must also determine whether the accused person could raise an affirmative defense. In those cases, prosecutors not only need to prove the crime, but they also need to determine whether the evidence could disprove the defense beyond a reasonable doubt. Ultimately, the decision to bring any charges rests on whether the available evidence is sufficient for prosecutors to meet those standards.

Based on the evidence, three relevant offenses were considered in this case. First is the violation of Maryland's Use of Force Statute, which makes it a crime for officers to intentionally use excessive force.<sup>4</sup> The second and third offenses are homicide related charges based on the intentional killing of a person.

There is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officers violated the aforementioned statutes. Accordingly, the IID will not pursue criminal charges against any of the subject officers. This report explains in further detail why, based on the evidence, a prosecutor could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that any officer committed a crime.

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<sup>4</sup> See Md. Code, Public Safety §3-524(d)(1).

### A. Maryland Use of Force Statute

Proving a violation of the Use of Force Statute requires a prosecutor to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that a subject officer:

- (1) used force that was not necessary and proportional to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury to themselves or another person, or to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement objective;
- (2) intended to use force that was excessive, *i.e.* not necessary and proportional under the circumstances; and
- (3) the use of excessive force resulted in serious bodily injury or death;<sup>5</sup>

In this case, it is undisputed that the subject officers caused Mr. Bucknor's death, so only the first two elements are at issue. Determining whether an officer's use of force is "necessary and proportional" to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury to someone or accomplish a legitimate law enforcement objective is a fact-specific inquiry. Generally speaking, a use of force is considered "necessary and proportional" when an officer had no reasonable alternative available to the officer under the circumstances, the kind and degree of force was appropriate in light of the officer's legitimate law enforcement objective, and it was not likely to result in harm that was out of proportion or too severe in relation to the officer's law enforcement objective, given the context in which it was used.<sup>6</sup> When a factfinder— either a judge or a jury —conducts this analysis, they must consider the totality of the circumstances, including, but not limited to, the nature of the call for service, what occurred in the moments before force was used, what the subject officers knew at the time force was used, and the time and distances involved.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the totality of the circumstances, there is no evidence that the subject officers intended to use force that exceeded that which was necessary and proportional to prevent Mr. Bucknor from being a danger to themselves or others. With respect to whether the use of force was necessary, Mr. Bucknor's behavior posed a threat to the safety of Cpl. Johnson at the time the subject officers discharged their weapons. Mr. Bucknor was armed with an eight-inch knife when Cpl. Johnson and Lt. Martinez encountered him, which Mr. Bucknor refused to drop despite repeated verbal commands from both subject officers. In addition to giving verbal commands, initially both subject officers unsuccessfully attempted to deescalate the situation by backing away from Mr. Bucknor, which created distance between themselves and Mr. Bucknor. Given the circumstances, when Mr. Bucknor continued to advance toward Cpl. Johnson with the knife, Mr. Bucknor presented an imminent threat of death or serious injury to Cpl. Johnson. Mr. Bucknor's behavior required that the subject officers fire their service weapons at him for Cpl. Johnson's safety.

With respect to whether the kind and degree of force used by the subject officers was proportional to the imminent threat of serious harm presented by Mr. Bucknor, the evidence shows

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<sup>5</sup> MPJI-Cr 4:36 (3d ed. 2024).

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the "necessary and proportional" standard, see [this opinion](#) written by the Office of the Attorney General. 107 Op. Atty. Gen. Md. 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

that the force used by Cpl. Johnson and Lt. Martinez was appropriate. Mr. Bucknor refused to discard his knife and began advancing toward Cpl. Johnson with the knife. As Mr. Bucknor's wielding of the knife presented an imminent threat of serious harm or death to Cpl. Johnson, the subject officers' uses of force were proportional under the circumstances.

Based on the evidence, a prosecutor could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officers' uses of force were not necessary and proportional to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury or death to themselves. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge the subject officers with a violation of the Use of Force Statute.

## B. Homicide Offenses

When a person is killed, there are four homicide charges that a prosecutor may consider in the State of Maryland:

- First Degree Murder: the willful, deliberate, and premeditated killing of another.<sup>8</sup>
- Second Degree Murder: when the defendant intended to kill or inflict such serious injury that death would be the likely result and there was no justification or mitigating circumstances.<sup>9</sup>
- Voluntary Manslaughter: an intentional killing that is not murder because the defendant acted in partial self-defense.<sup>10</sup>
- Involuntary Manslaughter: when the defendant acted with gross negligence and that conduct caused the death of another.<sup>11</sup>

First Degree Murder was not considered in this case because there is no evidence to support that the shooting of Mr. Bucknor was premeditated. Premeditation requires a prosecutor to prove that “the design to kill must have preceded the killing by an appreciable length of time, that is, time enough to be deliberate.”<sup>12</sup> While this inquiry requires a fact-specific evaluation, a factfinder should consider the totality of the circumstances, including whether an individual is defending themselves against deadly force.<sup>13</sup> As the shooting of Mr. Bucknor was intentional, but not premeditated, Second-Degree Murder and Voluntary Manslaughter are the homicide offenses that remain for consideration.

If the evidence indicates that there is legal justification or certain mitigating circumstances involved, such as self-defense, then a prosecutor could not prove the remaining homicide offenses

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<sup>8</sup> MPJI-Cr. 4:17 (3d ed. 2024).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> MPJI-Cr 4:17.2 (3d ed. 2024).

<sup>11</sup> MPJI-Cr. 4:17.9 (3d ed. 2024).

<sup>12</sup> *Tichnell v. State*, 287 Md. 695, 717 (1980).

<sup>13</sup> See *Purnell v. State*, 250 Md. App 703, 714-715 (2021).



against the subject officers.<sup>14</sup> A police officer's use of deadly force is legally justified if it is in complete self-defense, defense of others, or in furtherance of law enforcement related duties.<sup>15</sup>

Complete self-defense and defense of others, also known as perfect self-defense or defense of others, exists when the accused: (1) was not the initial aggressor (or did not raise the level of force to deadly force); (2) had the subjective belief that they or another person were in immediate or imminent danger of serious harm or death; (3) that belief was objectively reasonable; (4) used force that was not more than what was reasonably necessary in light of the threat or actual force; and (5) used force for the purpose of aiding the person that they were defending.<sup>16</sup> Complete self-defense and defense of others are affirmative defenses, which means that a prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that one of the elements of either defense is not applicable.

When an officer has sufficient probable cause to believe that a person poses a “threat of serious physical harm,” then the officer may use deadly force,<sup>17</sup> and the reasonableness of that decision must be viewed from “the perspective of a reasonable police officer similarly situated.”<sup>18</sup> In practice, this means that a factfinder must consider that police officers often work under rapidly changing circumstances and that what constitutes a reasonable use of force may change from moment to moment.<sup>19</sup>

The evidence shows that Mr. Bucknor was the aggressor. He was armed with a knife when he initially began approaching Lt. Martinez, and later advanced toward Cpl. Johnson. Even after receiving several loud verbal commands to drop the weapon, Mr. Bucknor did not comply with the subject officers' commands. Those facts provided a basis for the subject officers to believe that their lives were in danger, and that such a belief was reasonable. Since the subject officers faced a threat of death or serious injury from Mr. Bucknor, their use of deadly force against him was reasonably necessary.

Based on the investigation, the actions of the subject officers do not constitute the crime of Second-Degree Murder. Prosecutors are unable to overcome any of the elements of complete self-defense. Moreover, because complete self-defense also applies to Voluntary Manslaughter,<sup>20</sup> a prosecutor would be unable to prove any homicide offense in this matter. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge the subject officers with a homicide offense.

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<sup>14</sup> If a defendant has the requisite *mens rea* to uphold a claim of complete self-defense or defense of others – specifically, a subjective belief that their or another's life was in imminent danger that was objectively reasonable under the circumstances, then the claims are valid regardless of any unintended consequences. See *Malaska v. State*, 216 Md. App. 492, 517-522 (2014).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*; MPJI-Cr 4:17.3 (3d ed. 2024).

<sup>16</sup> *Porter v. State*, 455 Md. 220, 234-36 (2017); MPJI-Cr 4:17.2, *supra*.

<sup>17</sup> *Estate of Blair v. Austin*, 469 Md. 1, 24 (2020) (quoting *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 11 (1985)).

<sup>18</sup> *State v. Albrecht*, 336 Md. 475, 501 (1994); *State v. Pagotto*, 361 Md. 528, 555-556 (2000) (quoting *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 397 (1989)).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *State v. Faulkner*, 301 Md. 482, 485 (1984).

## **VI. Conclusion**

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the April 20, 2025, police-involved death of Aevon Roy Bucknor, Jr. in Prince George's County, Maryland. The Office of the Attorney General has declined to pursue charges in this case because, based on the evidence obtained in its investigation, the subject officers did not commit a crime.