



**INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS
DIVISION**

Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in
Baltimore County on October 8, 2025

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Declination Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death of Robert Adams on October 8, 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.”¹ If the Attorney General determines that the investigation provides sufficient grounds for prosecution, then the IID “shall have exclusive authority to prosecute the offense.”²

I. Introduction

On October 8, 2025, at approximately 8:30 p.m., several Baltimore County Police Department (“BCPD”) officers responded to multiple 911 calls reporting shots fired at a residence in the 2100 block of Larkhall Road in Dundalk, Maryland. Shortly after arrival, the officers formed a perimeter around the residence and verbally identified themselves as police. At around the same time, they observed a man, later identified as Robert Adams, standing in a second-floor window of the residence racking a shotgun. As Mr. Adams finished racking the shotgun, he pointed it toward the officers. Multiple officers opened fire with their service weapons, striking Mr. Adams. Several minutes later, a BCPD tactical team responded to the scene and established a barricade. Approximately two hours later, officers entered the residence and found Mr. Adams on the first-floor suffering from gunshot wounds. Emergency medical services (“EMS”) arrived and pronounced Mr. Adams dead at the scene a short time later. No officers were injured during the incident.

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 Office of 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 used 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 forensic and autopsy reports, police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and EMS reports, body-worn camera footage, private camera footage, photographs, departmental policy, and 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.

¹ Md. Ann. Code, State Gov’t § 6-602 (c)(1).

² Md. Ann. Code, State Gov’t § 6-604 (a)(1).

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

This investigation involved one decedent and six subject officers:

- A. The decedent, Robert James Adams, was 55 years old at the time of the incident. He was a White male who lived in Dundalk, Maryland.
- B. Officer Nicholas Cook has been employed by the BCPD since April 2022. He is a White male who was 33 years old at the time of the incident.
- C. Officer Luke Eubert has been employed by the BCPD since July 2024. He is a White male who was 25 years old at the time of the incident.
- D. Officer Austin Kiss has been employed by the BCPD since January 2021. He is a White male who was 28 years old at the time of the incident.
- E. Officer Malik McLaughlin has been employed by the BCPD since February 2019. He is a Black male who was 27 years old at the time of the incident.
- F. Officer Andrew Meyer has been employed by the BCPD since February 2019. He is a White male who was 39 years old at the time of the incident.
- G. Officer Mason Rice has been employed by the BCPD since December 2023. He is an Asian male who was 25 years old at the time of the incident.

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

II. Factual Summary

On October 8, 2025, between approximately 8:28 p.m. and 8:31 p.m., the Baltimore County 911 Communications Center received three 911 calls reporting that a White male, later identified as Robert Adams, was firing a shotgun outside in the 2100 block of Larkhall Road in Dundalk, Maryland. One of the callers identified themselves as a relative of Mr. Adams and provided dispatchers with a physical description of him. Within moments of the calls, dispatchers radioed that they had received multiple calls for a “white male between 40 and 45 outside shooting a shotgun” on Larkhall Road. Multiple BCPD officers, including Nicholas Cook, Luke Eubert, Austin Kiss, Malik McLaughlin, Andrew Meyer, and Mason Rice, responded.

Between approximately 8:29 p.m. and 8:33 p.m., the subject officers arrived on scene and positioned themselves behind various vehicles on Larkhall Road in front of Mr. Adams's house. Officers Cook and Meyer were armed with rifles, and Officers Kiss, McLaughlin, Rice, and Eubert were armed with handguns. Those officers remained in place for the next several minutes, while other officers contacted Mr. Adams's relatives who were nearby. Mr. Adams's relatives reported that he was suffering from mental health issues.



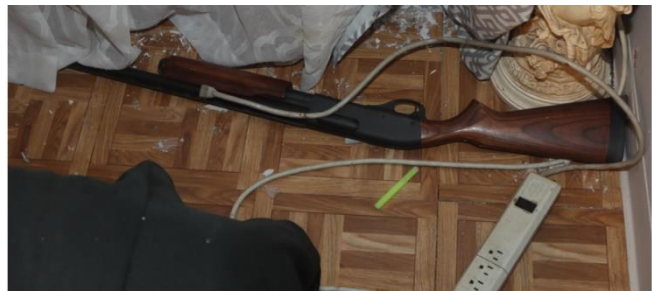
Image 1: An aerial photograph of BCPD officers (circled in red) positioned behind cars on the road in front of Mr. Adams's house (circled in blue).



Image 2: A still photograph of a private video, capturing the moment Mr. Adams pointed a shotgun (circled in red) toward the officers on the street.

At approximately 8:44 p.m., an officer made a request for the BCPD tactical team because the on-scene responders were unsure whether Mr. Adams was still alive and armed. Following the shooting, Mr. Adams moved from the upstairs room downstairs to his kitchen. The subject officers, along with other officers who arrived after the shooting, maintained a perimeter in the area by placing crime scene tape and ordering bystanders to remain in their homes. At approximately 10:00 p.m. BCPD's tactical team arrived. The tactical team attempted to contact Mr. Adams via loudspeaker, but Mr. Adams did not respond. Roughly forty-five minutes after the tactical team's arrival, they entered Mr.

At approximately 8:40 p.m., Mr. Adams approached a second-floor window of his house while holding a shotgun. Officer Cook yelled "County Police," then radioed "Long gun upstairs" to the other officers on scene. A second later, a nearby witness officer who was shining a flashlight at Mr. Adams yelled, "Guys, he's loading it!" Mr. Adams audibly racked the shotgun, then began aiming it out of the window toward the officers. At roughly the same time Mr. Adams aimed the shotgun, the six subject officers opened fire, striking Mr. Adams.



Images 3 & 4: Crime scene photographs of the loaded (top) and unloaded (bottom) shotguns recovered from the room Mr. Adams was standing in at the time of the shooting.

Adams's apartment and found Mr. Adams lying

unresponsive in his kitchen. After the tactical team medic checked Mr. Adams's vitals, officers determined that no medical aid could be provided. EMS medics responded to the kitchen several minutes later and pronounced Mr. Adams dead on the scene.

Two shotguns were recovered from the room Mr. Adams was standing in at the time of the shooting, one unloaded on a bed, and the other loaded and on the floor underneath a window.

III. Supplemental Information

A. Autopsy

On October 10, 2025, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (the "OCME") performed an autopsy of Mr. Adams. The OCME found that Mr. Adams sustained a total of four gunshot wounds to his chest, back, and left shoulder. The Medical Examiner concluded that multiple gunshot wounds caused Mr. Adams's death and determined that the manner of his death was "homicide."³

B. Firearms Recovery and Ballistics Information

Maryland State Police ("MSP") Forensic Sciences Division crime scene technicians responded to the scene, and while processing the scene, recovered each of the subject officers' department issued handguns, four Glock 17 9mm semi-automatic handguns, a Colt M4 rifle, and a Smith and Wesson M&P 15 rifle. Technicians also recovered two shotguns from the room Mr. Adams was standing in at the time of the shooting. One shotgun, a .410-gauge bolt-action New Haven 283TA model with a sawed-off barrel, was unloaded with two spent cartridge casings nearby. The second shotgun, a 12-gauge Remington 870 pump-action model, was loaded with three rounds.

The MSP forensic laboratory conducted a firearms analysis, including the weapons and cartridge casings collected from the scene. Based on the evidence recovered at the scene by crime scene technicians, Officer Cook fired at least ten rounds from his department-issued rifle, Officer Eubert fired at least six rounds from his department-issued handgun, Officer McLaughlin fired at least six rounds from his department-issued handgun, Officer Meyer fired at least five rounds from his department-issued rifle, and Officer Rice fired at least one round from his department-issued handgun.

C. Department Policy

The BCPD Field Manual contains written policies and guidelines, including those that address the use of force and the discharge of firearms by its sworn officers.

³ 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.

Under Section 12-1.0, officers must, if reasonable and feasible, try to communicate with a subject and de-escalate a conflict without resorting to using force. Additionally, officers are directed to use “the least amount of force necessary and proportional to safely control a situation” and may not use force against a person unless that force is necessary and proportional to “prevent an imminent threat of physical injury to a person” or to “carry out the duties and responsibilities of a law enforcement officer.” The policy provides that force is “not necessary unless there is no reasonable alternative to using force that, under the totality of the circumstances, would safely and effectively achieve the same legitimate ends.” Further, officers may not use deadly force unless it is necessary and proportional to protect a person from imminent death or serious harm, and all other alternatives have either been exhausted or are unreasonable given the circumstances. After using force, officers are trained that as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so, they should render “basic first aid to persons injured as a result of police action” and promptly request appropriate medical assistance. The policy does not elaborate on what metrics officers use to determine the safety or feasibility of rendering aid in any given situation, nor does it provide an overview of the sort of first aid training that officers receive.

Field Manual Article 12-4.0 governs the use of firearms, which limits the discharge of firearms to six specific circumstances, including self-defense from death or serious injury and in defense of another person from death or immediate danger of serious physical injury.

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.⁴ 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 them. 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.

⁴ 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.⁵

In this case, it is undisputed that the subject officers caused Mr. Adams'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.⁶ 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.⁷

There is no evidence that the subject officers intended to use force that exceeded that which was necessary and proportional to prevent Mr. Adams from being a danger to himself or others. First, with respect to whether the use of force was necessary, Mr. Adams's behavior posed a threat to the safety of the subject officers and civilian bystanders in the area. The subject officers were on scene with a legitimate law enforcement objective because they were responding to multiple 911 calls from nearby residents reporting that Mr. Adams was shooting a shotgun. When the subject officers arrived on scene, they were in marked patrol cruisers, and Officer Cook announced them as police. A short time later, Mr. Adams appeared in an upstairs window, racked a shotgun in view of the officers, and began pointing the shotgun toward the officers and the houses behind them. The subject officers then fired their weapons. Given Mr. Adams's actions, the subject officers were left with no reasonable alternative to protect themselves and bystanders other than the use of deadly force.

⁵ MPJI-Cr 4:36 (3d ed. 2024).

⁶ 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.

⁷ *Id.*; see also *Barnes v. Felix*, 605 U.S. 73, 80 (2025) ("[T]he 'totality of the circumstances' inquiry into a use of force has no time limit... earlier facts and circumstances may bear on how a reasonable officer would have understood and responded to later ones.").

Second, with respect to whether the kind and degree of force used by the subject officers was proportional to the imminent threat of harm presented by Mr. Adams, video evidence shows that the force used by the subject officers was proportional. Mr. Adams racked a firearm in view of the officers and pointed it toward them. As the shotgun presented an imminent threat of serious harm or death to the subject officers and any bystanders, the subject officers' use of force was proportional under the circumstances.

Based on the evidence, a prosecutor could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officers' use of force was not necessary and proportional to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury or death to himself. 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.⁸
- 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.⁹
- Voluntary Manslaughter: an intentional killing that is not murder because the defendant acted in partial self-defense.¹⁰
- Involuntary Manslaughter: when the defendant acted with gross negligence and that conduct caused the death of another.¹¹

First Degree Murder was not considered in this case because there is no evidence to support that the shooting of Mr. Adams 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.”¹² 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.¹³ As the shooting of Mr. Adams 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 against the subject officers.¹⁴ 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

⁸ MPJI-Cr. 4:17 (3d ed. 2024).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ MPJI-Cr 4:17.2 (3d ed. 2024).

¹¹ MPJI-Cr. 4:17.9 (3d ed. 2024).

¹² *Tichnell v. State*, 287 Md. 695, 717 (1980).

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

¹⁴ See *Malaska v. State*, 216 Md. App. 492, 517-522 (2014).

life was in imminent danger that was objectively reasonable under the circumstances, then the claims are valid regardless of any unintended consequences.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ 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,¹⁸ and the reasonableness of that decision must be viewed from “the perspective of a reasonable police officer similarly situated.”¹⁹ 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.²⁰

The evidence shows that Mr. Adams was the aggressor because, after police were summoned to his home for firing a shotgun, Mr. Adams racked a shotgun in front of the subject officers and began pointing it at them. Those facts provide a basis for the subject officers to reasonably believe that their lives, as well as the lives of their fellow officers and civilians in the immediate vicinity, were in danger.

Based on the investigation, the subject officers’ actions do not constitute the crime of Second-Degree Murder because the evidence is insufficient to overcome the elements of complete self-defense. Moreover, because complete self-defense also applies to Voluntary Manslaughter,²¹ 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.

VI. Conclusion

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the October 8, 2025, police-involved death of Robert Adams in Dundalk, 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.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*; MPJI-Cr 4:17.3 (3d ed. 2024).

¹⁷ *Porter v. State*, 455 Md. 220, 234-36 (2017); MPJI-Cr 4:17.2, *supra*.

¹⁸ *Estate of Blair v. Austin*, 469 Md. 1, 24 (2020) (quoting *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 11 (1985)).

¹⁹ *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)); *Barnes*, 605 U.S. at 80.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *State v. Faulkner*, 301 Md. 482, 485 (1984).