



**INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS
DIVISION**

Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in
Baltimore on January 20, 2026

April 7, 2026

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Declination Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death of Jamarl Muse on January 20, 2026

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.”

I. Introduction

On Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 9:18 p.m., multiple Baltimore Police Department (BPD) officers were dispatched to a residence in the 6800 block of Bank Street in response to a 911 call reporting that someone was being threatened by a man with a gun. The caller provided a detailed description of the man, later identified as Jamarl Muse, and indicated that Muse fled the area on a white bicycle. As officers were en route to the residence, they saw a man in the 6500 block of Eastern Avenue riding a white bicycle and wearing clothing matching the description provided by the caller. While officers attempted to detain Muse, he withdrew a handgun from his clothing and discharged it. In response, multiple officers fired their service weapons, striking Muse. Officers rendered emergency medical aid until emergency medical services (EMS) arrived on the scene. Medics pronounced Muse dead on scene. Officers recovered Muse’s handgun.

After completing its investigation and evaluating all 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 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 proceedings but may not be used in criminal investigations or prosecutions due to the subject officer’s Fifth Amendment rights. If any compelled statements exist in this case, they have not been considered in the IID’s investigation.

This report is composed of a factual narrative followed by a legal analysis. The narrative is supported by evidence obtained in this investigation, including forensic and autopsy reports, police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and EMS reports, police body-worn camera footage, photographs, department policies, and interviews with civilian and law enforcement witnesses. The subject officers chose not to make a statement 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:

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

- A. The decedent, Jamarl Muse, was 40 years old at the time of the incident. He was a Black male who lived in Baltimore, Maryland.
- A. Sergeant Carlos Arias has been employed by BPD since December 2010. He is a Hispanic male who was 41 years old at the time of the incident.
- B. Officer Edwin Ruiz has been employed by BPD since November 2022. He is a Hispanic male who was 27 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 none were relevant to this investigation.

I. Factual Summary

On January 20, 2026, at 9:14 p.m., BPD received a 911 call reporting that Jamarl Muse was threatening someone with a gun in a residence in the 6800 block of Bank Street in Baltimore. The caller provided Muse's name, said that he was armed with a .357 revolver, and described him as a Black man wearing black jeans and a face mask. The caller also stated that Muse was leaving the scene on a white bicycle and that he walked with a limp. Multiple BPD officers were dispatched to the area at 9:18 p.m., including Sergeant Carlos Arias and Officer Edwin Ruiz.

At 9:23 p.m., one of the responding officers in a marked patrol cruiser radioed that he saw a person wearing black clothing and riding a white bicycle in the 6500 block of Eastern Avenue.² That officer used his emergency lights and siren to signal Muse to stop. Within a minute, the officer was joined by other officers in other cruisers that also activated their emergency lights. Muse refused to stop and instead traveled through the parking lots of nearby businesses to avoid contact with the officers. According to law enforcement witnesses, Muse repeatedly reached into his waistband area to adjust an object while he rode his bicycle. Given the context of the call, the officers who observed this behavior believed that Muse was armed. After a few moments, Muse rode his bicycle onto a nearby on-ramp for I-95, and multiple officers, including Sgt. Arias and Officer Ruiz, parked their cruisers and ran after Muse on foot.

² This location is approximately a 3-minute bicycle ride from the 6800 block of Bank Street. The weather was below freezing during this incident, and interviews with witness officers confirmed there were no other bicyclists on the road at the time.

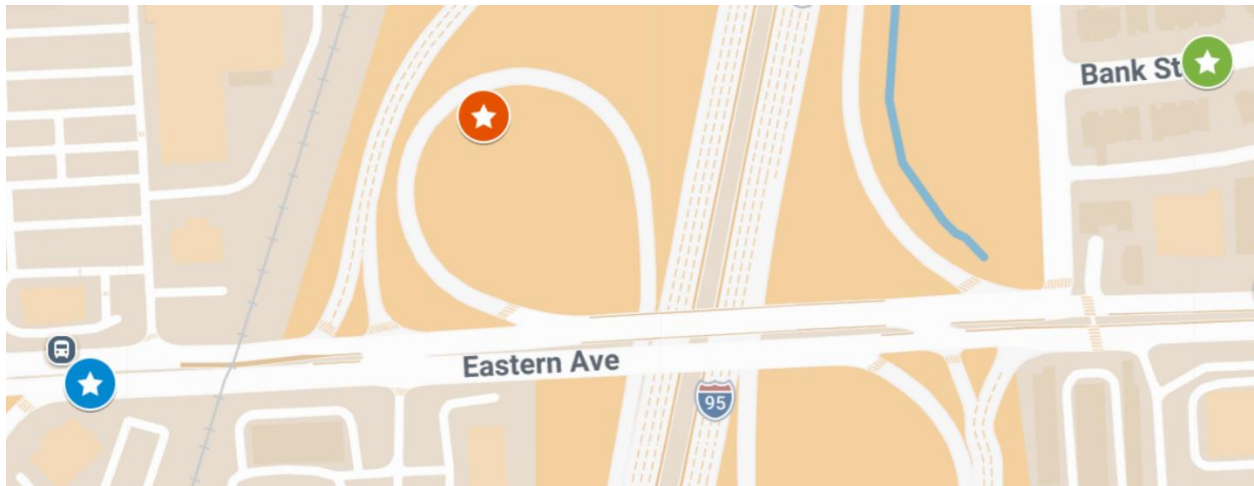


Image 1: A map of the area where the incident occurred. The green marker represents the 6800 block of Bank Street, the initial 911 call location. The blue marker represents the 6500 block of Eastern Avenue, where officers located Muse. The red marker marks the location of the shooting.

At 9:25 p.m., the first officer to reach Muse grabbed him off of his bicycle and took him to the ground in a grassy area near the on-ramp. Muse landed on his side with his right arm on the ground and his left arm near the officer. The two men struggled with each other. The officer held Muse’s left arm and ordered Muse to stop reaching for his waistband. An additional officer joined the struggle seconds later; he echoed the first officer’s commands while attempting to take control of Muse’s right arm. Sgt. Arias and Officer Ruiz were the next officers on scene, arriving roughly twenty seconds after Muse had been taken to the ground.

Almost as soon as Sgt. Arias and Officer Ruiz arrived, Muse drew and fired a revolver. After hearing the loud noise and seeing the bright flash from the gunshot, Sgt. Arias called out, “Shots fired!” The two initial responding officers rapidly moved away from Muse. Sgt. Arias and Officer Ruiz drew and fired their department-issued handguns multiple times, striking Muse.



Image 2: A still photograph from Sgt. Arias’s body-worn camera, capturing the flash from the barrel of Muse’s revolver at the moment it was fired.



Image 3: A still photograph from Officer Ruiz’s body-worn camera, showing Muse holding the revolver (circled in red).

The on-scene officers reported the shots fired to dispatch, checked each other for gunshot wounds, and provided medical aid to Muse. The officers continued to provide aid until EMS arrived on scene to take over treatment. A short time later, EMS pronounced Muse deceased.

II. Supplemental Information

A. Autopsy

On January 21, 2026, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner performed an autopsy of Muse. The medical examiner determined that Muse's cause of death was multiple gunshot wounds and concluded that the manner of death was "Homicide."³ Muse sustained eleven gunshot wounds to his head, neck, right hand, and torso. There was evidence of close-range discharge of a firearm to his neck.

B. Firearms Recovery and Ballistics Information



Image 4: A crime scene photograph of the open chamber of Muse's revolver on the night of the incident. The dented primer (circled in red) is indicative of a fired round.

BPD Crime Scene Unit technicians responded to the scene and recovered Sgt. Arias's department-issued Glock 9mm handgun, Officer Ruiz's department-issued Glock .40 caliber handgun, and Muse's Taurus .357 Magnum revolver. Technicians also recovered five 9mm fired cartridge cases, seven .40 caliber fired cartridge cases, and one .357 Magnum fired cartridge case.

The BPD Forensic Laboratory Section conducted a firearms analysis on the weapons and cartridge cases recovered from the scene. Forensic testing confirmed that both of the subject officers' department issued handguns and Muse's revolver were operable.

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 Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner uses five categories of manner of death: natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. These terms are not considered to be legal determinations; rather, they are largely used to assist in collecting public health statistics. *A Guide for Manner of Death Classification*, First Edition, National Association of Medical Examiners, February 2002.

Based on the evidence recovered at the scene, Sgt. Arias fired at least five rounds from his department-issued handgun, Officer Ruiz fired at least seven rounds from his department-issued handgun, and Muse fired one round from his revolver.



Image 5: A crime scene photograph of Muse’s revolver.

C. Department Policy

BPD provides officers with written policies and procedures, as well as practical training in the use of force. The BPD policies and training materials encompass the written policies and procedures for its sworn officers, which include several written policies relevant to this investigation.

BPD use of force policy includes the use of deadly force (Policy 1115) and the use of firearms (Policy 409). These two policies state that an officer “shall use only the force Reasonable, Necessary, and Proportional to respond to the threat or resistance to effectively and safely resolve an incident and will immediately reduce the level of force as the threat or resistance diminishes.”

The policies define those terms as follows:

- Reasonable: “A member uses Reasonable Force when the member uses no more force than required to perform a lawful purpose.”
- Necessary: “Force is necessary only when no reasonably effective alternative exists.”
- Proportional: “Proportionality measures whether the force used by the member is rationally related to the level of resistance or aggression confronting the member.”

The use of force policy specifies that “[t]he use of Deadly Force/Lethal Force shall always be the last resort,” and shall occur only when officers “reasonably believe such action is immediately necessary to protect a member or another person from an Imminent Threat of death or Serious Physical Injury.” Before using deadly force, officers “shall consider environmental considerations such as field of fire, backdrop.”

III. 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 only charge a person with a crime 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, they also need to 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 a 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 committed the aforementioned crimes. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not pursue criminal charges against the subject officers. This report explains in further detail why, based on the evidence, the IID cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officers committed a crime.

A. Use of Force Statute

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

- (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) used excessive force that resulted in serious bodily injury or death.⁵

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 1) an officer had no reasonable alternative available to the officer under the circumstances; 2) the kind and degree of force was appropriate in light of the officer’s legitimate law enforcement objective, and 3) given the context, the force was not likely to result in harm that was too severe or disproportionate to the officer’s law enforcement objective.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

Based on the totality of the circumstances, there is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officers used force beyond what was necessary and proportional to prevent Muse from posing a threat to themselves or others.

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

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 (2022).

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.”)

First, with respect to whether the use of force was necessary, Sgt. Arias, Officer Ruiz, and the other officers attempted to stop Muse after receiving a 911 call that a man matching his clothing and mode of transportation was threatening a person with a gun. Further, the officers located Muse less than five minutes away from the 911 call location. During their initial encounter, multiple officers signaled for Muse to stop using their emergency lights and sirens, but Muse refused and attempted to evade the officers. Based on his behavior and the call for service, the officers had reason to believe that Muse was armed, and they had a legitimate law enforcement purpose to detain him. Once officers caught up to Muse on foot and began detaining him, Muse struggled against them and repeatedly ignored their commands to stop reaching for his waistband. During the struggle, Muse fired his revolver in close proximity to the officers that were trying to detain him. Given this threat, we cannot prove that the use of deadly force in response was unnecessary.

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, the evidence shows that Muse was armed and reaching for a revolver as officers tried to detain him. Further, Muse successfully drew and fired the revolver which presented an imminent threat of serious bodily harm or death to the officers on the scene. Under the circumstances, we cannot defeat a claim that the subject officers' use of force in response was not proportional.

Against this backdrop, there is insufficient evidence to 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 themselves or others. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge Sgt. Arias or Officer Ruiz 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 that the shooting of Muse 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

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).

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 Muse was intentional, but not premeditated, Second-Degree Murder and Voluntary Manslaughter are the homicide offenses for consideration.

If the evidence indicates that there is legal justification or certain mitigating circumstances involved, such as self-defense, then a prosecutor cannot prove the remaining homicide offenses against the subject officer.¹⁴ A police officer’s use of deadly force is legally justified if it is in complete self-defense or defense of others.¹⁵

Complete self-defense, also known as perfect self-defense, 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 and that belief was objectively reasonable; (3) used force that was not more than what was reasonably necessary in light of the threat or actual force; and (4) used force for the purpose of aiding the person that they were defending.¹⁶ Complete self-defense is an affirmative defense, 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,” the officer may use deadly force,¹⁷ and the reasonableness of that decision must be viewed from “the perspective of a reasonable police officer similarly situated.”¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

The evidence shows that the subject officers were not the aggressors in this incident. Muse was armed with a revolver and reportedly threatening others. Muse fled from the police and failed to comply with officers’ commands to stop reaching for his waistband as they attempted to lawfully detain him. Muse drew and fired the revolver while the officers were still trying to grab his arms to detain him. Given these circumstances, we cannot prove that it was unreasonable for Sgt. Arias or Officer Ruiz to believe that their lives or the lives of their fellow officers were in immediate danger. Similarly, we cannot prove that it was unreasonable for Sgt. Arias or Officer Ruiz to use deadly force in response to the threat that Muse’s actions presented.

Based on the investigation, the actions of the subject officers do not constitute the crime of second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter. We cannot overcome any of the elements of complete self-defense. Involuntary manslaughter, meanwhile, only applies to grossly negligent or

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).

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

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

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

¹⁸ *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)).

¹⁹ *Id.*

reckless acts that result in death, as opposed to the intentional act of killing another; as such, the offense is inapplicable in this case. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge Sgt. Arias or Officer Ruiz with a homicide offense.

VI. Conclusion

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the January 20, 2026, police-involved death of Jamarl Muse in Baltimore, Maryland. The Office of the Attorney General has declined to pursue charges in this case because, based on the evidence obtained in the IID's investigation, Sergeant Arias and Officer Ruiz did not commit a crime.