



INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in
Baltimore on May 14, 2026

August 4, 2026

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Declination Report Concerning the Officer-Involved Death of Louis Jackson on May 14, 2026

The Independent Investigations Division of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (“IID”) is charged with investigating “police-involved incidents that result in the death of individuals or injuries likely to result in death.” 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 May 14, 2026, at approximately 9:12 a.m., Baltimore City 911 dispatch received information that Louis Jackson was at 820 S. Caton Avenue with a firearm and that he wanted to kill himself. At approximately 9:20 a.m., Officer Sharod Watson of the Baltimore City Police Department (“BPD”) was in his patrol vehicle at the intersection of S. Caton Avenue and Wilkens Avenue. As Officer Watson drove his patrol vehicle westbound on Wilkens Avenue, he radioed to dispatch that an individual, who was later identified as Mr. Jackson, had shot at his patrol vehicle with a small revolver. Officer Watson activated his body-worn camera, drove further down the block, and made a U-turn. He stopped his patrol vehicle and told dispatch that Mr. Jackson was coming towards him. BPD Officer Mark Rankine was near the area and responded in his patrol vehicle. Officer Watson issued multiple commands for Mr. Jackson to get on the ground and to get down. Mr. Jackson did not comply and ran towards Officer Watson while pointing a firearm in his direction. Officer Rankine arrived at the scene, and both he and Officer Watson discharged their service weapons, striking Mr. Jackson. Officers rendered medical aid until emergency medical services (“EMS”) arrived on scene. The incident was captured on body-worn cameras worn by BPD police officers and by surveillance cameras from St. Agnes Hospital.

After completing its investigation, the Office of the Attorney General has determined that there is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officers committed 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 officers’ Fifth Amendment rights. If any compelled statements exist in this case, they have not been considered in the IID’s investigation. The subject officers in this case chose not to make a statement to the IID; this choice had no impact on the prosecutorial decision.

This report contains a summary of the evidence followed by a legal analysis. Every fact in the narrative is supported by the 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 policy, and witness interviews. 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, Louis Jackson, was 46 years old at the time of the incident. He was a Black male who lived in Baltimore, Maryland.
- B. Police Officer Sharod Watson has been employed by BPD since June 2012. He is a Black male who was 38 years old at the time of the incident.
- C. Police Officer Mark Rankine has been employed by BPD since May 2022. He is a Black male who was 41 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.

II. Factual Summary

On May 14, at approximately 9:12 a.m., an individual called Baltimore City 911 to report that Louis Jackson had a gun and was threatening to kill himself. The caller further advised that Mr. Jackson was located at 820 S. Caton Avenue. The 911 dispatch operator said she was sending police and an ambulance to that location. At approximately 9:20 a.m., Officer Sharod Watson was driving his marked patrol vehicle in the area. Officer Watson turned from Caton Avenue onto westbound Wilkens Avenue. 820 S. Caton Avenue is located at this intersection. Officer Watson radioed that an individual standing on the corner of Wilkens Avenue and Caton Avenue had shot at his patrol vehicle. Officer Watson drove further down the block, made a U-turn, and stopped his vehicle. Officer Watson informed the dispatch operator that he would keep his distance from the individual, who appeared to be carrying a small revolver. Officer Watson then advised that the individual was coming towards him. As Officer Watson got out of his patrol vehicle, Mr. Jackson ran towards him pointing a gun. Officer Watson took cover behind his patrol vehicle and ordered Mr. Jackson to get down on the ground. Mr. Jackson did not comply with Officer Watson's commands and continued to run towards him with the gun pointed in his direction.

Officer Rankine was in his marked patrol vehicle in a parking lot on Wilkens Avenue, further west of Officer Watson's location, when Officer Watson radioed that someone had shot at

his patrol vehicle. Officer Rankine immediately activated his lights and sirens and body-worn camera. He drove towards the intersection of Wilkens and Caton Avenue.¹



Image 1: Still image from St. Agnes Hospital surveillance footage with Louis Jackson in red circle.

When Officer Rankine reached the scene, Officer Watson was outside of his patrol vehicle. Officer Rankine parked his patrol vehicle behind a civilian's vehicle that was stopped a few car lengths behind Officer Watson's patrol vehicle. As Officer Rankine got out of his vehicle, Mr. Jackson was next to Officer Watson's vehicle and there was an exchange of gun fire between Mr. Jackson and Officer Watson.² Officer Rankine yelled, "shots fired," and fired his service weapon at Mr. Jackson, who fell to the ground.

¹ Officer Rankine stated on body-worn camera that he believed that Mr. Jackson had also shot at his patrol vehicle prior to this incident.

² Multiple .40 caliber cartridge casings matching the caliber of Officer Watson's and Officer Rankine's department-issued Glock handguns were recovered from the area near the officers' patrol vehicles. The recovered revolver contained four .32 caliber shell casings. The IID's investigation did not determine conclusively whether Mr. Jackson fired at the subject officers.



Image 2: Still image from Officer Rankine's body-worn camera footage with Louis Jackson in red circle and Officer Watson in blue circle.

Officer Watson recovered a revolver from the street near where Mr. Jackson fell and placed it in his patrol vehicle. He began CPR until other officers arrived and took over care. Officers provided medical care until EMS reached the scene. Mr. Jackson was transported to St. Agnes Hospital where he was pronounced deceased at 10:00 a.m. on May 14.



Image 3: Still image from Officer Watson's body-worn camera.

III. Supplemental Information

A. Autopsy

On May 15, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (“OCME”) performed an autopsy of Mr. Jackson. The medical examiner determined that multiple gunshot wounds were the cause of death for Mr. Jackson. The medical examiner concluded that Mr. Jackson’s manner of death was “Homicide.”³

B. Firearms Recovery and Ballistics Information

BPD Crime Scene Evidence Division processed the scene and recovered Officer Watson’s and Officer Rankine’s department-issued Glock handguns and a Harrington and Richardson pistol revolver with four .32 caliber shell casings. Eight .40 caliber cartridge casings were recovered from the scene near the officers’ patrol vehicles. The BPD Forensic Laboratory Section conducted a firearms analysis on the weapons recovered. Forensic testing confirmed that Officer Watson’s and Officer Rankine’s department-issued Glock handguns and the revolver were operable.

C. Department Policy

BPD has policies on the use of force, including the use of deadly force (Policy 1115) and the use of firearms (Policy 409). These two policies state 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.”

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 OCME uses five categories of manner of death: natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. These terms are not considered a legal determination; 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.

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.”

IV. Legal Analysis

After a criminal investigation, prosecutors must determine whether to bring criminal charges against a person. 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 also must determine whether the accused person could raise an affirmative defense. In those cases, prosecutors not only need to prove the crime, but they also must 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 in this case, three offenses were considered. 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 for the intentional killing of a person.

As set forth below, there is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officers committed the aforementioned crimes. Accordingly, the IID will not pursue criminal charges against the subject officers. This report explains why, based on the evidence, the IID cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that either of 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 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) used excessive force that resulted in serious bodily injury or death.⁵

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

⁵ MPJI-Cr 4:36 (3d ed. 2024).

Determining whether an officer's use of force is "necessary and proportional" to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury to someone or to 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 has no reasonable alternative under the circumstances, the degree of force was appropriate in light of the officer's legitimate law enforcement objective, and given the context, the force was not likely to result in harm that was out of proportion or too severe in relation 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 officer 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 address the threat that Mr. Jackson posed. As to the first element, whether the use of force was necessary, both Officer Watson and Officer Rankine reported that Mr. Jackson had fired at their patrol vehicles. When Officer Watson stopped his vehicle on Wilkens Avenue, Mr. Jackson ran towards him pointing a revolver. Mr. Jackson ignored Officer Watson's commands to get on the ground and continued to run in his direction with the firearm raised until he was at Officer Watson's patrol vehicle. Given these facts, the IID could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the use of deadly force was unnecessary.

Second, with respect to whether the force used was proportional to the imminent threat of harm presented, the IID could not defeat a claim that the force used was proportional. Within seconds of Officer Watson stopping his patrol vehicle, Mr. Jackson ran towards him pointing a revolver. Officer Rankine arrived at the scene as Officer Watson was taking cover behind his vehicle and shots were being fired. Under the circumstances, the IID could not prove that the subject officers failed to use proportional force in response to the threat posed by Mr. Jackson.

Based on the evidence presented here, the IID 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. Further, the IID could not prove that the subject officers intended to use force that was excessive. 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

There are four homicide charges that a prosecutor may consider in the State of Maryland:

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.*

- 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 Mr. Jackson 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 As the shooting of Mr. Jackson was intentional, but not premeditated, Second-Degree Murder and Voluntary Manslaughter remain for consideration.¹³

A factfinder should consider the totality of the circumstances, including whether an individual is defending themselves against deadly force.¹⁴ If there is a valid self-defense claim or other legal justification for an officer’s use of force, then a prosecutor cannot prove the remaining homicide offenses. A police officer’s use of deadly force may be legally justified if it is in complete self-defense, defense of others, or in furtherance of law enforcement-related duties.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 were in immediate or imminent danger of serious harm or death; (3) that belief was objectively reasonable; and (4) used force that was not more than what was reasonably necessary in light of the threat.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 self-defense is not applicable.

When an officer has probable cause to believe that a person poses a “threat of serious physical harm,” the officer may use deadly force.¹⁷ The reasonableness of that decision must 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).

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

¹³ Involuntary manslaughter applies only to grossly negligent or reckless acts that result in death, as opposed to the intentional act of killing another; as such, the offense is inapplicable in this case.

¹⁴ *See Purnell v. State*, 250 Md. App 703, 714-715 (2021).

¹⁵ *Wilson v. State*, 87 Md. App. 512 (1991); 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)).

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

Here, the subject officers believed that Mr. Jackson had shot at their patrol vehicles. When Mr. Jackson then ran towards Officer Watson while pointing a firearm, the subject officers were legally justified in defending themselves with deadly force. The subject officers were not the initial aggressors. Officer Watson gave multiple commands for Mr. Jackson to get on the ground, but Mr. Jackson continued to run towards Officer Watson with the firearm raised. Under the circumstances, the IID cannot disprove a claim by the subject officers that they reasonably believed that Mr. Jackson presented an immediate danger of serious harm or death. Further, we cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that this belief was objectively unreasonable.

Based on the investigation, the actions of the subject officers do not constitute the crime of second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter. The IID would not be able to disprove a self-defense claim beyond a reasonable doubt. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge the subject officers with a homicide offense.

V. Conclusion

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the May 14, 2026, officer-involved death of Louis Jackson in Baltimore City, 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, the subject officers did not commit a crime.

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.*