

Investigative Synopsis of the Officer Involved Death of Ashland County Sheriff's Office

On Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at approximately 12:00 noon, the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) received a request from the Ashland County Sheriff's Office to respond to the scene of an officer involved death/shooting on Maple Street, Odanah, Wisconsin.

On November 8, 2017 at approximately 11:39 a.m., the Ashland County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to Maple Street in Odanah, WI for a report of a male subject walking outside of a residence carrying a knife. The caller identified himself as Jason Pero and described the person walking outside of his residence wearing a purple sweatshirt and white pants.

Deputy Mrdjenovich arrived at the location and located a male subject carrying a knife. The suspect was later identified as Jason I. Pero. Deputy Mrdjenovich ordered Pero several times to drop the knife. Pero ignored the commands of Deputy Mrdjenovich and continued to advance toward Deputy Mrdjenovich's location. Deputy Mrdjenovich retreated to the rear driver's side bumper of his squad; continuing to give Pero commands to drop the knife. Pero didn't respond and continued to advance toward Deputy Mrdjenovich with the knife in his hand. Deputy Mrdjenovich said Pero had the knife in an upright position located higher on Pero's body. Pero was approximately eight to ten feet from Deputy Mrdjenovich and lunged toward Deputy Mrdjenovich with the knife. Deputy Mrdjenovich fired one round from his handgun and continued to give Pero verbal commands. Pero quickly took additional steps toward Deputy Mrdjenovich and then lunged toward Deputy Mrdjenovich again. Deputy Mrdjenovich fired a second round from his handgun. After the second shot Pero looked at Deputy Mrdjenovich and said, "I just wanted to die."

Pero was struck by both rounds that were fired. Pero was transported to Ashland Memorial Medical Center in Ashland and was pronounced deceased.

DCI responded to the scene with eleven Special Agents; S/A Welsch, McBain, Smith, Sutherland, Katchka, Reblin, Frederick, Kleinhans, Pudlowski, Ruff and Indermuehle one Special Agent in Charge Powell. S/A Welsch was assigned as the lead investigator and S/A Frederick was assigned as the secondary investigator. The Wisconsin State Patrol Traffic Reconstruction Unit (WSP TRU) assisted with the investigation and created a scene diagram.

Family members of Jason I. Pero were identified and a death notification was made by DCI and the Ashland County Sheriff's Office. Wisconsin Crime Victim Services forms were also provided to the family.

DCI S/A Welsch and Frederick interviewed involved deputy Mrdjenovich on November 11, 2017.

A neighborhood canvass was conducted by the DCI and the Ashland Police Department a total of approximately twelve people were interviewed during the neighborhood canvass.

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There was no squad video or audio from the responding squad. Body camera wasn't worn by the responding deputy and no security cameras were located in the area.

Evidence from this investigation included the deputy's firearm, two spent cartridge casings and two fired bullets; all of the evidence were transmitted to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory for examination. A knife was recovered and placed into evidence.

An autopsy of Jason I. Pero was conducted at the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office on November 9, 2017 by Dr. Vincent Tranchida and was attended by DCI S/A Fernandez. The preliminary information provide to the agent by Dr. Tranchida noted: There was one gunshot wound to the upper chest left of the midline and one gunshot wound to Pero's lower aspect of the left side of the chest below the left breast. The gunshot wounds to the torso resulted in the death of Pero.

On Tuesday, December 19, 2017 the completed investigative file as of that date was turned over to District Attorney Michael Nieskes from the St. Croix County District Attorney's Office for review.