

The New York Times

April 6, 2013

In Shift, Police Advise Taking an Active Role to Counter Mass Attacks

By ERICA GOODE

The speed and deadliness of recent high-profile shootings have prompted police departments to recommend fleeing, hiding or fighting in the event of a mass attack, instead of remaining passive and waiting for help.

The shift represents a “sea change,” said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, which recently held a meeting in Washington to discuss shootings like those in Newtown, Conn., and Aurora, Colo.

The traditional advice to the public has been “don’t get involved, call 911,” Mr. Wexler said, adding, “There’s a recognition in these ‘active shooter’ situations that there may be a need for citizens to act in a way that perhaps they haven’t been trained for or equipped to deal with.”

Mr. Wexler and others noted that the change echoes a transformation in police procedures that began after the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, when some departments began telling officers who arrived first on a scene to act immediately rather than waiting for backup. Since then, the approach has become widespread, as a succession of high-profile shootings across the country has made it clear that no city or town is immune and that police agencies must be prepared to take an active approach.

“We used to sit outside and set up a perimeter and wait for the SWAT team to get there,” said Michael Dirden, an executive assistant chief of the Houston Police Department. “Now it’s a recognition that time is of the essence and those initial responders have to go in,” he said, adding that since the Virginia Tech University shooting in 2007, the department has been training first responders to move in on their own when they encounter active gunfire.

Research on mass shootings over the last decade has bolstered the idea that people at the scene of an attack have a better chance of survival if they take an active stance rather than waiting to be rescued by the police, who in many cases cannot get there fast enough to prevent the loss of life.

In an analysis of 84 such shooting cases in the United States from 2000 to 2010, for example, researchers at Texas State University found that the average time it took for the

police to respond was three minutes.

“But you see that about half the attacks are over before the police get there, even when they arrive quickly,” said J. Pete Blair, director for research of the university’s Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center and an author of the research, which is set to be published in a book this year.

In the absence of a police presence, how victims responded often made the difference between life and death, Dr. Blair said.

In 16 of the attacks studied by the researchers, civilians were able to stop the perpetrator, subduing him in 13 cases and shooting him in 3 cases. In other attacks, civilians have obstructed or delayed the gunman until the police arrived.

As part of the research, Dr. Blair and his colleagues looked at survival rates and the actions taken by people in classrooms under attack during the Virginia Tech massacre, in which Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 students and teachers before killing himself.

In two classrooms, the students and instructors tried to hide or play dead after Mr. Cho entered. Nearly all were shot, and most died. In a third classroom, Prof. Liviu Librescu, a Holocaust survivor, told his students to jump out the second-story window while he tried to hold the classroom door shut, delaying Mr. Cho from coming in. Professor Librescu was killed, but many of the students survived, and only three were injured by gunfire. In another classroom, where the students and teacher blocked the door with a heavy desk and held it in place, Mr. Cho could not get in, and everyone lived.

“The take-home message is that you’re not helpless and the actions you take matter,” Dr. Blair said. “You can help yourself and certainly buy time for the police to get there.”

Kristina Anderson, 26, who was shot three times during the Virginia Tech attack, said that every situation is different but that she thinks it can help for people to develop a plan for how they might act if a mass shooting occurred.

“Everywhere I go now, I think about exits and doorways and potential places to hide and things to barricade and fight back with,” Ms. Anderson said. “Some person has to take action and lead.”

Two instructional videos, one produced by Houston’s Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the other by the University of Wisconsin’s police department, recommend that civilians fight an attacker if options like escaping or hiding are not available.

Dennis Storemski, a former executive assistant chief in Houston's police department and director of the public safety office that produced the video, called "Run. Hide. Fight.," said the decision to produce it emerged from a realization that while first responders were "fairly well prepared" to deal with mass shootings, the public was not. The video has received over two million hits on YouTube, and the office gets requests every day from other police departments and government agencies that would like to use it, Mr. Storemski said.

He said initially, the suggestion that victims should fight back as a last resort stirred some controversy.

"We had a few people that thought that was not a wise idea," Mr. Storemski said, but that in some cases fighting back might be the only option.

Susan Riseling, chief of police at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, said the Virginia Tech episode changed her thinking about how to advise students because it was clear that Mr. Cho had "one goal, and that seemed to be to kill as many people as possible before ending his life."

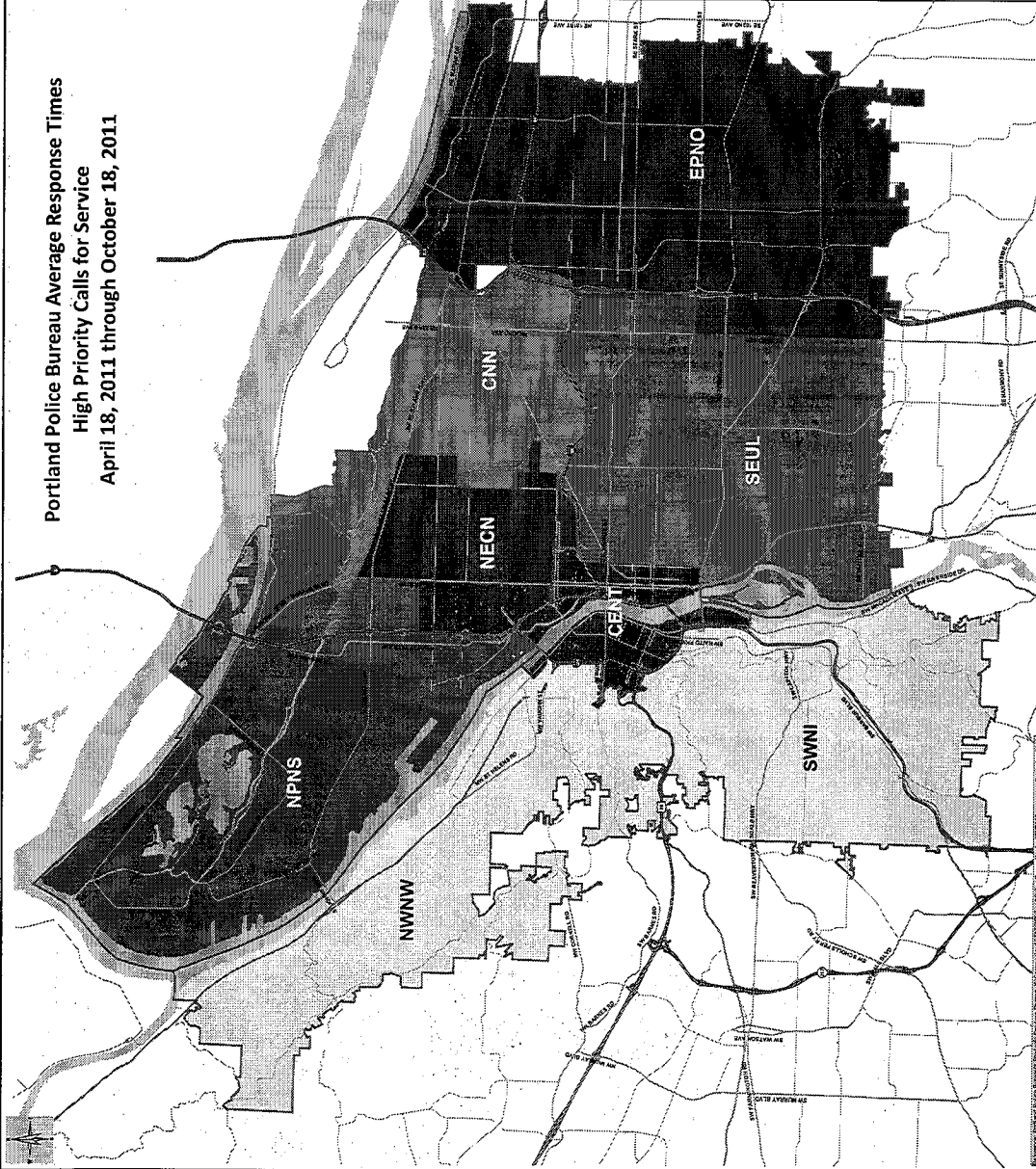
The department's video, screened during training sessions around the state but not available online, tells students to escape or conceal themselves if possible, but if those options are not available, to fight. In the video, students are shown throwing a garbage can at an attacker and charging at him as a group.

"If you're face to face and you know that this person is all about death, you've got to take some action to fight," Chief Riseling said.

What she worries about most, she said, is that spree shootings are becoming so common that she suspects people have begun to accept them as a normal part of life.

"That's the sad part of it," Chief Riseling said. "This should never be normal."

Portland Police Bureau Average Response Times High Priority Calls for Service April 18, 2011 through October 18, 2011



Bureau Notes

The Portland Police Bureau serves the residents of Portland and the business community utilizing a three precinct (Central, East, and North) configuration. In the precincts, 17 major units are 1,228 sworn and non-sworn full-time officers. Sixteen of these positions are Police Officers, and another 118 are Sergeants.

The primary focus of the Police Bureau is to respond to 9-1-1 calls, however a number of specialty units address other issues and include the: Gun Task Force, Gang Enforcement Team, Human Sex Trafficking, Youth Services, the Service Coordination Team dealing with chronic offenders, Domestic Violence, Graffiti and Property Crimes, Crisis Intervention dealing with mental health issues, and Emergency Response Teams.

Level of Service

The Portland Police Bureau responds to over 400,000 dispatched and officer-initiated calls for service per year. The Bureau has a citywide goal of responding to high priority calls (for example, an assault in progress, a robbery occurring) in 5 minutes or less. Approximately 1 in 4 calls for service is a high priority call.

Map Explanation

Average response time is from the time an Officer is dispatched to a 9-1-1 call to when that Officer arrives on the scene of the call. The average response time for each of the 8 City of Portland Office of Management & Finance (OMF) areas. The average response times ranged from a low of 4.36 minutes for the Central City area to 6.92 minutes for the Southwest area.

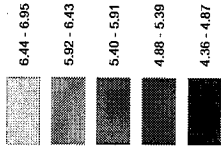
At the request of OMF, the times are displayed in five equal interval ranges. These ranges were based on the final average response times calculated for each OMF area and do not reflect the actual overall ranges for each area.

In general, average response times are longer on the westside where traffic density and access can be issues. Some of the larger patrol districts are on the westside. Patrol district size is based, in part, on calls for service workload. Crime rates for the westside are also lower than other city areas.

Information Source

On April 17, 2011 the City of Portland and Multnomah County went to a new 9-1-1 dispatch system. The data represent the most recent 6 months of calls for service incidents from the VCAD SQL database. Response time data are dispatched Priority 1, 2, and 3 calls from dispatch area of origin. Map boundary areas are from the City of Portland Office of Management & Finance (OMF). Citywide numbers include Portland Police CAD incidents outside these OMF boundaries.

Average Response Times (in Minutes)



Office of Management & Finance Areas

- Central City
- Central Northeast
- East Portland
- Northeast
- North Portland
- Northwest
- Southeast
- Southwest

Average Response Time Per Area (in Minutes)

CENT:	4.36
CNN:	5.47
EPNO:	4.74
NECN:	4.56
NPNS:	4.87
NWNW:	6.49
SEUL:	5.29
SWNI:	6.92
Citywide:	4.99

The information on this map was derived from the Portland Police Bureau's CAD system. The City of Portland cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions that may appear in this product. However, corrections of any errors will be appreciated.



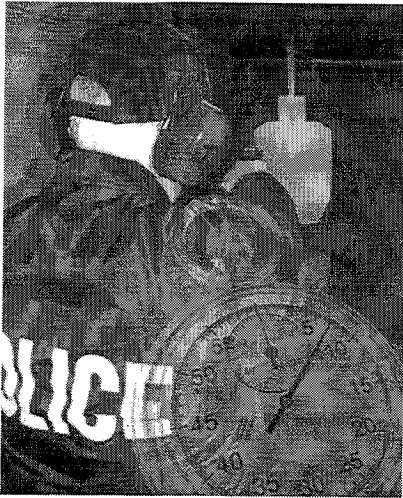
Departments : The winning edge

Rethinking the 21-Foot Rule

You can't react to a knife attack as fast as you think you can.

Share 4

October 01, 2007 | by Bob Irwin



Back in 1988, Calibre Press released a stunning law enforcement training tape titled "Surviving Edged Weapons." It included a sequence that showed how long it takes the average officer to draw and fire his or her sidearm when reacting to a charging, knife-wielding suspect.

In repeated scenarios of similar attacks with different officers, the video reveals that it takes about one-and-a-half seconds for the officer to draw and fire two shots. From that time reading, the narrator determines that the attacker could be as far away as 21 feet and still stab the officer before he could effectively fire his handgun. The tape then goes on to discuss tactical alternatives such as side stepping the opponent or using intervening objects to disrupt the line of attack.

The tape is great, but it has led to a dangerous myth. Over the years, this simple demonstration of draw speed has morphed into an astounding misconception that now permeates law enforcement and security training, "The 21-Foot Rule."

Let's take a close look at why this almost universal law enforcement myth is dead wrong.

Expanding the Circle

Research by Dr. Bill Lewinski of The Force Science Research Center and Dr. Marvin Fackler has repeatedly shown that officer reaction times are significantly longer than commonly believed.

Now consider that the officers on the Calibre tape knew where the suspect was, what he was armed with, and that he was about to charge. On the tape, the suspect begins to move and the officer begins to draw. That eliminates the real-world delays of perceiving the threat and then making the decision to defend with gunfire.

The Force Science Research Center has shown that it takes the average officer about half a second to perceive a threat and approximately another half second to decide what to do about it. All of this has to happen before the officer begins his or her draw stroke. What this means is that with the threat closing at seven feet per half second, we are closer to a 35-foot rule.

And it is extremely difficult to smoothly draw and accurately fire when under a life-threatening attack. So that means that we had better add another 10 feet to allow for the attacker to keep coming if we miss center mass or even if we hit him, even mortally wound him, and he doesn't go down.

It's now the 45-foot rule.

Behind the Reaction Curve

A few years ago, a scenario was set up to surprise the cadets at a police academy. A single target was placed to one side of the range. During a break in the training two days later, an instructor walked up behind an armed cadet and calmly said, "The blue target to your left is a threat. Shoot it twice. Now!"

The average time for each student to accomplish this test was 2.6 seconds. A 2.6-second draw and fire time translates to about 37 feet of suspect motion.

And realize that the students were told there was a threat and what force to apply. Only the element of surprise was added to the encounter. Without the instructor's command, we must add seven feet for discovery of the threat and another seven feet for the decision to shoot. That's a grand total of 51 feet.

Closing the Reaction Gap

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Closing the Reaction Gap

The first thing we have to discuss is what we would do in an actual attack. If you really know the suspect is about to charge, wouldn't you prudently draw your firearm to at least a low ready position before the suspect charged?

Also, once the suspect attacked, wouldn't you give ground to increase the distance between you and his knife? Wouldn't you also seek the cover of some intervening object to slow your opponent's charge?

Finally, as the ultimate delaying tactic, wouldn't you also place some shots across the attacker's pelvic girdle rather than center mass to break a hip or leg bone and perhaps cause the suspect to fall?

There are a number of ways to reduce our newly established 45- to 51-foot danger zone.

You should remain alert to the suspect's hands and motion, keep as much distance as practical from the suspect, and have a preplanned direction of escape. Be aware of intervening objects that could reduce the speed of an attacker or force a change in his direction.

No Line in the Sand

Despite what some would have you believe, there is no 21-foot kill zone. Deciding when to shoot a suspect who is holding a knife is one of the toughest judgment calls you will ever make.

Some years ago while on patrol, my partner and I observed a young fellow chasing another down the Las Vegas Strip at 2 A.M. while swinging a machete in the air. We pulled over to intervene and, as I exited the car, I commanded him to drop his weapon.

He pointed his finger at his chest and looked around in an apparent effort to see if I was shouting at him or someone else. As I assured him I meant him, he began meandering toward me as if he could not hear.

The distance quickly closed to 15 feet. I gave a few feet of ground and leveled my SIG on his chest; he suddenly placed the machete down on the sidewalk and followed my directions to place his hands on our patrol vehicle fender.

I soon learned that his beef with the intended victim was caused by a shouted obscenity. A bit more investigation revealed that this subject was severely mentally retarded.

Should I have shot him under "The 21-foot rule?" Maybe, but he appeared to be confused and, at least when I confronted him, non-threatening.

Could I have shot him legally? I presume I could have. And don't get me wrong, I would never second guess any officer firing under similar circumstances. These are judgment calls based on your experience and the totality of known circumstances.

And not everyone closer than 21 feet with an edged weapon is a real threat. It's the totality of the circumstances and not the 21-foot rule that determines whether you should fire.

A determined attacker can easily close a 21-foot distance much faster than a surprised officer can perceive the threat and neutralize it by shooting. Sometimes, however, even inside of 21 feet, the attacker is not a true danger. Never assume that any specific distance provides a safe zone (or a free fire zone) on the street.

Training Solutions

A "charging attacker" drill can be set up quickly and inexpensively.

On your training range, install a wire seven or eight feet off the ground on one lane from your backstop to the area behind the firing line. Parallel to this wire, attach a foot-long piece of two-by-two wood using cup hooks so the wood can slide back and forth along the wire. From the center of the two-by-two, run a one-by-two board down toward the ground and staple onto it a cardboard IPSC-type target at human height. As an alternative you can mount a cardboard target backer and staple on your qualification silhouette. A string attached to the end of the two-by-two can then be used to pull the target toward the shooter.

Now place the shooter at seven yards with his firearm at low ready and have him engage the target when it moves toward him. The instructor pulling the string controls the speed from meandering suspect to a full-out charging opponent. Next try the same drill starting with a holstered handgun.

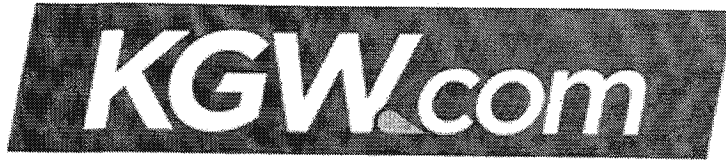
During these drills, it is important to keep another instructor right behind the shooter to prevent him or her from turning and firing sideways as the target passes.

For a real eye opener, try this from a normal "hostile interview" distance of 6 to 8 feet. You will quickly learn that you have no chance to draw and fire fast enough to stop this type of threat. You must give ground, side step, or use objects to disrupt the subject's line of charge. After running this training drill a few times, you will rethink the 21-foot rule.

few times, you will rethink the 21-foot rule.

Bob Irwin is a lieutenant with the Boulder Constable's Office and operates The Gun Store in Las Vegas, Nev. He has taught firearms and use of force in 28 police academies over his 35-year career and teaches Law Enforcement Instructors for Nevada POST as well as civilian instructors for the NRA.

Tags: Assaults on Officers, Deadly Force, Edged Weapons



Clackamas mall shooter faced man with concealed weapon



by Mike Benner, KGW Staff

kgw.com

Posted on December 17, 2012 at 6:18 AM

Updated Monday, Dec 17 at 12:52 PM

PORTLAND -- Nick Meli is emotionally drained. The 22-year-old was at Clackamas Town Center with a friend and her baby when a masked man opened fire.

"I heard three shots and turned and looked at Casey and said, 'are you serious?'" he said.

More: [Gunman, two dead in Clackamas mall shooting](#)

The friend and baby hit the floor. Meli, who has a concealed carry permit, positioned himself behind a pillar.

"He was working on his rifle," said Meli. "He kept pulling the charging handle and hitting the side."

The break in gunfire allowed Meli to pull out his own gun, but he never took his eyes off the shooter.

"As I was going down to pull, I saw someone in the back of the Charlotte move, and I knew if I fired and missed, I could hit them," he said.

Meli took cover inside a nearby store. He never pulled the trigger. He stands by that decision.

"I'm not beating myself up cause I didn't shoot him," said Meli. "I know after he saw me, I think the last shot he fired was the one he used on himself."

Photos: Clackamas Town Center shooting

The gunman was dead, but not before taking two innocent lives with him and taking the innocence of everyone else.

"I don't ever want to see anyone that way ever," said Meli. "It just bothers me."



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Man, 41, cleared in fatal Aloha shooting, told 9-1-1 operator man threatened to 'cut my heart out,' court records say



By Rebecca Woolington, The Oregonian

on December 05, 2012 at 6:35 PM, updated December 05, 2012 at 11:09 PM

Galen Griffin, cleared in the fatal Aloha shooting of a 24-year-old man, told a 9-1-1 operator that prior to the shooting, the man had approached him and threatened to "cut my heart out," according to court records.

Shortly before 8 p.m., Griffin, 41, called 9-1-1 to report that he was being followed by two men, whom he did not know, and worried that he would become the target of a robbery, according to a charging decision written by Washington County Deputy District Attorney Bracken McKey. Wearing a backpack, Griffin left his Aloha apartment on Oct. 2 to walk to the Albertsons store on Southwest 185th Avenue when the two started following him.

Griffin reportedly changed the direction he was walking several times and hid to avoid a confrontation, standing behind a vehicle. After reportedly losing sight of Griffin, the two men -- whom authorities identified as 24-year-old Forest Alig and 40-year-old Steven Rhee, both of Beaverton -- quickly spoke before heading in different directions.

Alig again started to follow Griffin, who had walked several blocks in a circle, and called Rhee.

Griffin and Alig became engaged in a confrontation near the intersection of Southwest Rosa Road and 183rd Avenue.

According to the charging decision, Alig yelled obscenities at Griffin, who saw "something shiny in Alig's hand." Griffin later told investigators that the object could have been a cellphone, but he wasn't sure.

"Get away from me," Griffin told Alig.

Griffin, who has a concealed handgun permit, pulled out a .357 caliber revolver. He "pointed" the weapon's laser at Alig's feet while repeatedly telling him to "get away from me," the charging decision says.

Alig continued to advance. Griffin fired a shot toward Alig.

Alig again approached. Griffin fired again, striking Alig in the chest.

After firing the second shot, Griffin told the 9-1-1 operator, "he just charged at me from about 15 feet away, and I think I hit him," the charging decision says. "I'm running back to my apartment. He threatened to cut

my heart out."

Alig ran from the scene but soon collapsed along the road.

Shortly before 8 p.m., deputies responded to the report of a shooting near the intersection of Rosa Road and 183rd Avenue. They arrived within a minute of the shooting and found Alig, who died at the scene, on the side of the road.

Deputies located Griffin, who cooperated with investigators. Authorities also found Rhee near the scene and talked with him about his involvement.

A witness told authorities that before Alig collapsed near a bush on her property, he reached under his pant leg and into his shoe. The next morning she found two folding knives, including one with an open blade, under some weeds near the place Alig collapsed.

The knives were sent to the Oregon State Police Crime Lab, and Rhee's DNA was found on one of the weapons, according to the charging decision. Sgt. Bob Ray, a Washington County Sheriff's Office spokesman, said Alig's DNA was not found on the knives.

It's unknown whether Alig was holding a knife during his confrontation with Griffin, according to the charging decision. However, McKey wrote, "...it is a reasonable inference that Alig was armed with a knife and continued to advance towards Griffin to a distance of approximately 15 feet before Griffin shot a second time," McKey wrote in his decision.

Following several interviews with investigators, Rhee said on Oct. 2 he went with Alig to an apartment near the incident location because a tenant there owed him money. As they were trying to contact the tenant, Griffin walked by with his backpack.

Rhee told detectives that Alig told him to "retrieve items" from the passenger side of their vehicle, and "Rhee retrieved two knives," the charging decision says. He later told authorities that they were the same knives that were found at the scene.

"Rhee stated that Alig told him they were going to follow Griffin and take his backpack, presumably using the knives to accomplish their goal," McKey wrote in his decision.

After becoming uncomfortable with the robbery, Rhee dropped the knives along Rosa Road, he told authorities. According to the charging decision, the location where he said he left the weapons was about a half-block from the place they were found.

A Washington County grand jury on Wednesday indicted Rhee on charges of attempted first-degree and second-degree robbery, unlawful use of a weapon and distributing and possessing meth. He is being held in the Washington County Jail.

Oregon law enables people to use deadly force against another if they reasonably believe "the other person is committing or attempting to commit a felony involving the use or threatened imminent use of physical force," McKey wrote in his decision. The law further says that "a person may only use the degree of force which the person reasonably believes to be necessary."

"Griffin has repeatedly stated that he believed it was necessary to shoot Alig in order to save his own life," McKey wrote. "A review of the file leads me and the investigators assigned to this case to conclude that this belief was reasonable."

-- [Rebecca Woolington](#)

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