



Office of the New York State Attorney General Letitia James

Office of Special Investigation

September 26, 2025

Report on the Investigation into the Death of Taiquell Woodson

OVERVIEW

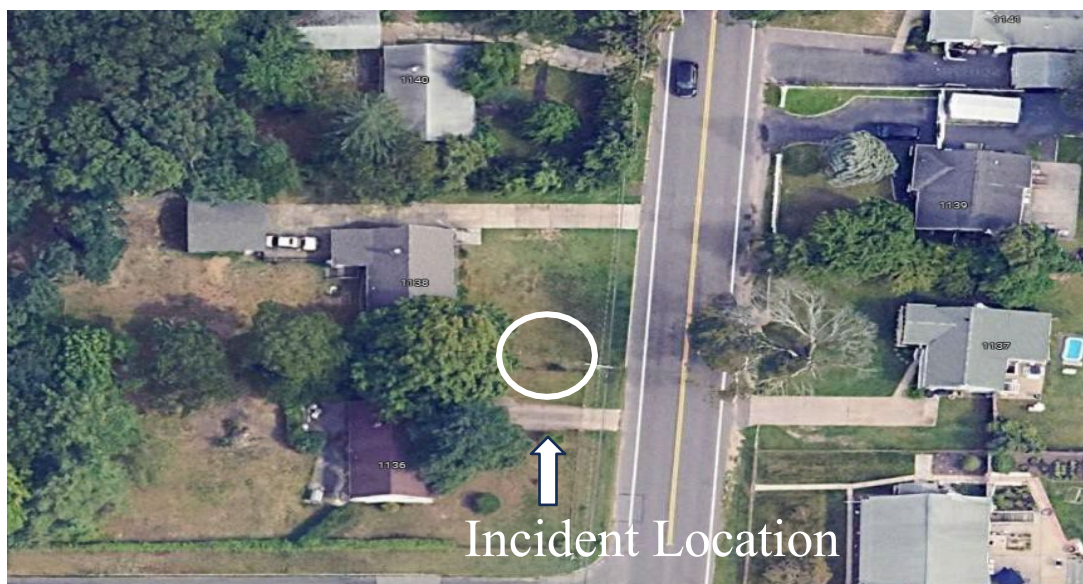
New York Executive Law Section 70-b (Section 70-b) authorizes the Attorney General's Office of Special Investigation (OSI) to investigate and, if warranted, to prosecute offenses arising from any incident in which the death of a person is caused by a police officer or peace officer. When, as in this case, OSI does not seek charges, Section 70-b requires issuance of a public report. This is the public report of OSI's investigation of the death of Taiquell Woodson, who was shot and killed on February 17, 2024, by officers from the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD).

On February 17, 2024, at 9:10 a.m., SCPD officers responded to reports of a domestic dispute at a house in Bay Shore, Long Island. When SCPD Officer Tyler Kozikowski knocked on the front door, Mr. Woodson came out of the house holding a knife in one hand and an expandable baton in the other. Mr. Woodson slashed Officer Kozikowski with the knife. SCPD Officer Joseph Esposito and Officer Kozikowski fired their service weapons at Mr. Woodson, causing his death. The entire incident was captured on body-worn camera (BWC) and home security video.

Having thoroughly investigated the matter and analyzed the law, OSI concludes a prosecutor would not be able to disprove beyond a reasonable doubt that the SCPD officers' use of deadly physical force against Mr. Woodson was justified under New York law and will not seek charges.

FACTS

Bayshore is near the southern shore of Long Island in Suffolk County. The shooting took place on the front lawn of a house on a two lane road in a residential neighborhood, as shown below.



Google Map image of the incident location.

OSI spoke with Mr. Woodson's wife (OSI does not publish the names of civilian witnesses) who said that on the morning of February 17, 2024, she and Mr. Woodson argued in their house. Mr. Woodson struck her while she was holding their child and took the child from her arms. Mr. Woodson's wife said she ran to a neighbor's house where she called 911.

Security video from the neighbor's house showed that at 9:07 a.m. Mr. Woodson's wife knocked on the front door and asked the neighbor to call the police because her husband had assaulted her.

According to the SCPD event detail report, SCPD officers were dispatched to Mr. Woodson's house at 9:08 a.m. According to video from their body worn cameras (BWCs), Officers Tyler Kozikowski, Joseph Esposito, and Tommy Shair arrived at 9:14 a.m. in marked police cars and in uniform. Officer Kozikowski spoke with Mr. Woodson's wife who said her husband had hit her and that she ran out of the house. She said that, to her knowledge, Mr. Woodson did not have any weapons, was still inside their house, and that their child was inside the house with Mr. Woodson.

According to BWC and Ring camera footage ([Ring Camera Video](#); [Officer Esposito](#); [Officer Kozikowski](#); [Officer Shair](#)), Officer Kozikowski walked to Mr. Woodson's house and knocked on the front door. Moments later, Mr. Woodson came out of the front door holding a knife in one hand and an extendable baton in the other.

OSI spoke with Officer Kozikowski who said that Mr. Woodson came charging out of the house with a large "commando-style" knife in one hand and an expandable baton in the other. Officer Kozikowski said he started to run and tried to turn to face Mr. Woodson when he, Officer Kozikowski, fell onto his back. Officer Kozikowski said that Mr. Woodson jumped on top of him and started swinging the knife in a downward motion, striking him multiple times in the breast plate of his body armor and on his arms and hand.



Still from PO Kozikowski's BWC while the officer was on the ground, showing the knife in Mr. Woodson's right hand.

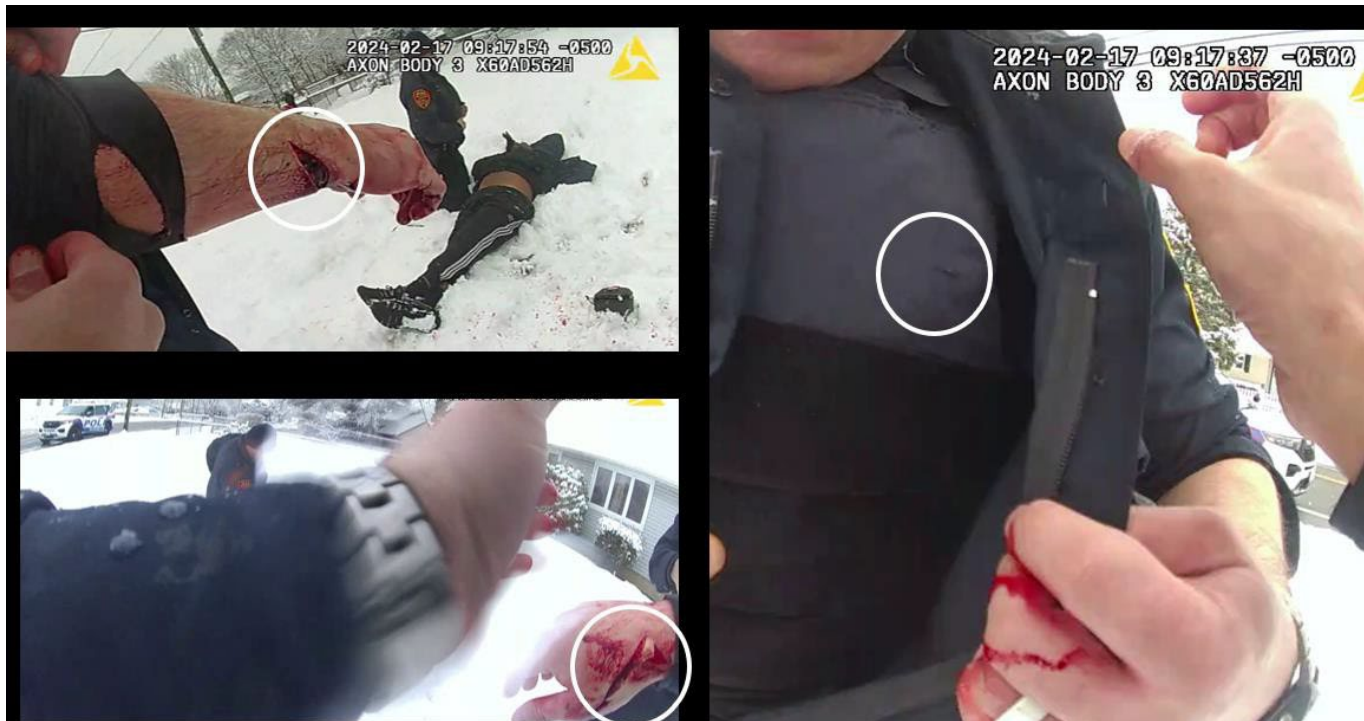
OSI spoke with Officer Shair who said that, as Mr. Woodson ran after Officer Kozikowski, Officer Shair deployed his Taser, which missed Mr. Woodson. OSI spoke with Officer Esposito who said that, as soon as he realized Officer Kozikowski was being stabbed with the knife, he drew his service weapon and fired numerous shots at Mr. Woodson until the attack stopped. Officer Kozikowski said he rolled onto his side as Officer Esposito began firing, drew his own gun, and fired before it malfunctioned. According to BWC, the entire incident lasted 10 seconds.

OSI spoke to PV, a neighbor and eyewitness. PV said he saw an officer knock on the front door of Mr. Woodson's house and that, almost immediately, Mr. Woodson charged out of his house holding a dark object in his right hand which was above his head. He saw the officer fall and Mr. Woodson fall on top of him, after which another officer fired at Mr. Woodson multiple times. PV said the officer who fell was bleeding badly.

According to the officers and as confirmed by BWC, the officers radioed for an ambulance and performed life saving measures on Mr. Woodson.

According to medical records, Mr. Woodson was unresponsive and pulseless when emergency medical technicians from Brentwood Legion Ambulance arrived. Paramedics Joshua Parker and Anderw Viskovich took over life-saving measures from the SCPD officers and then took Mr. Woodson to South Shore University Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

According to medical records, Officer Kozikowski was taken to Stony Brook University Hospital with lacerations to his right forearm and right hand, which required stitches, and left forearm.



Stills from BWCs showing lacerations to Officer Kozikowski's arm and hand, and a puncture to his bullet proof vest.

Evidence Collected

According to a Suffolk County Crime Lab report, two expended cartridge casings found at the scene of the shooting matched test-fired casings from Officer Kozikowski's gun, and eight expended cartridge casings found at the scene matched test-fired casings from Officer Esposito's gun. Based on BWC and evidence gathered at the scene, Officer Shair did not fire his gun.

SCPD's Crime Scene Unit (CSU) recovered a knife and expandable baton at the scene.



CSU photo of the knife recovered at the scene.



CSU photo of the baton recovered at the scene.

Autopsy

Dr. Aaron Rosen of the Suffolk County Office of the Medical Examiner conducted an autopsy and determined that Mr. Woodson was struck by eight gunshots to his torso, one to his left forearm, and a graze wound to his scalp. Dr. Rosen determined the cause of death to be “multiple gunshot wounds” and deemed the manner of death to be “homicide (shot by police).”

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Article 35 of the New York Penal Law defines the circumstances under which a person may be justified in using deadly force against another. Justification is a defense, not an affirmative defense, Penal Law Section (PL) 35.00. To obtain a conviction at trial, a prosecutor must disprove a defense beyond a reasonable doubt, PL 25.00(1).

In this case, the shooting officers used deadly physical force. Under PL 10.00(1) deadly physical force is “physical force which, under the circumstances in which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or other serious physical injury.” Under PL 10.00(10) serious physical injury is “physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.”

PL 35.15 is the basic self-defense provision, under which the use of deadly physical force is justified if the actor reasonably believes the other person is using or is about to use deadly physical force. The provision reads in relevant part as follows:

“1. A person may, subject to the provisions of subdivision two, use physical force upon another person when and to the extent he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to defend himself, herself or a third person from what he or she reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of unlawful physical force by such other person....

“2. A person may not use deadly physical force upon another person under circumstances specified in subdivision one unless (a) The actor reasonably believes that such other person is using or about to use deadly physical force. Even in such case, however, the actor may not use deadly physical force if he or she knows that with complete personal safety, to oneself and others he or she may avoid the necessity of so doing by retreating....”

In *People v. Jairo Castillo*, 42 NY3d 628, 631 (2024), the New York Court of Appeals stated:

“The defense of justification provides that a person may use physical force to defend himself against an assailant’s ‘imminent use of unlawful physical force,’ but does not authorize the use of ‘deadly physical force . . . unless . . . [the person] reasonably believes that [the assailant] . . . is using or about to use deadly physical force’ (Penal Law § 35.15). When considering a request for a justification charge, courts examine the evidence in the light most favorable to the defendant, and must provide the instruction if there is any reasonable view of the evidence that defendant was justified in his actions (see *People v Heiserman*, 39 NY3d 988, 990 [2022]). Justification has both a subjective requirement, that ‘defendant . . . actually believed . . . he [was] . . . threatened with the imminent use of deadly physical force,’ and an objective requirement, that defendant’s ‘reactions were . . . those of a reasonable man acting in self-defense’ (*People v Collice*, 41 NY2d 906, 907 [1977]).” (Ellipses and square brackets in original.)

Therefore, before using deadly force in self-defense, a person must honestly and in good faith believe that deadly force was about to be used against them or another and that deadly force was necessary for self-defense, and a reasonable person under the same circumstances could have believed the same.

Here, Mr. Woodson charged at Officer Kozikowski with a knife in his hand, jumped on top of him after he fell to the ground, and slashed his arms and hand, causing significant injury. Based on the videos linked to this report, it was clear that Mr. Woodson was going to continue attacking Officer Kozikowski with the knife, potentially causing his death, unless he was stopped by force, and it was clear that Officer Kozikowski could not have “retreated.” Under those circumstances, OSI concludes that a prosecutor would not be able to disprove beyond a reasonable doubt that Officer Kozikowski and Officer Esposito were justified when they fired their guns at Mr. Woodson, causing his death.

Therefore, OSI will not seek charges and closes the matter with this report.

Dated: September 26, 2025