

AARON M. FREY
ATTORNEY GENERAL



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
6 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0006

TEL: (207) 626-8800
TTY USERS CALL MAINE RELAY 711

REGIONAL OFFICES
84 HARLOW ST. 2ND FLOOR
BANGOR, MAINE 04401
TEL: (207) 941-3070
FAX: (207) 941-3075

125 PRESUMPSHOT ST., SUITE 26
PORTLAND, MAINE 04103
TEL: (207) 822-0260
FAX: (207) 822-0259

14 ACCESS HIGHWAY, STE. 1
CARIBOU, MAINE 04736
TEL: (207) 496-3792
FAX: (207) 496-3291

June 5, 2026

Sheriff Dale Lancaster
Somerset County Sheriff's Office
47 Court Street
Skowhegan, Maine 04976

Dear Sheriff Lancaster:

This office has completed its investigation and legal review of the incident on September 10, 2025, in Hartland, involving the use of deadly force by Somerset County Sheriff Deputy William Crawford and Detective Michael Lyman, that resulted in the death of 44-year-old Issac D. Robinson of Hartland.

Factual Summary

On August 28, 2025, Detective Carl Gottardi of the Somerset County Sheriff's Department obtained a nighttime "knock and announce" warrant for 98 Main Street in Hartland, the home of Issac Robinson, to search for drugs, business records, money, drug paraphernalia, and firearms. During a briefing prior to execution of the warrant, the operation plan was discussed, and officers were informed there was no direct knowledge of a threat to law enforcement. The warrant was executed on September 10, 2025, at approximately 5:46 am when members of the entry team, clearly identified as members of the Sheriff's Department, approached the residence, knocked loudly at an unlocked storm door that led to a small vestibule, identified themselves as law enforcement, and announced search warrant. When there was no response, Deputy Crawford approached the inner, locked, wooden door with a breaching ram and broke the door, permitting eight officers to make entry into the home. As entry was made, the Deputies continued to yell, "Sheriff's Department" and "search warrant," and moved in different directions through the house. Detective Lyman and Deputy David Cole made their way upstairs. Deputy Crawford went into the living room and observed three doors to his left. He determined no one was in two of the rooms but believed the third room was locked from the outside. Deputy Crawford kicked the door open while continuing to loudly announce, "Sheriff's Office" and "search warrant."

The light was on in the room, allowing Deputy Crawford to see a white dog and a man who appeared to be larger than him in stature. Deputy Crawford identified himself as a member of the Sheriff's Department, announced he had a search warrant, and the front of his uniform read "Sheriff's Department." Deputy Crawford saw the man, later identified as Issac Robinson, pick up a large knife and in the other hand, what the deputy believed was a knife sheath. Deputy Crawford continued to announce his affiliation with the Sheriff's office, his possession of a search warrant, and yelled multiple times for the man to drop the knife. Mr. Robinson refused to do so. Mr. Robinson was at the opposite end of the bedroom and according to what he later told investigators, Deputy Crawford was just inside the threshold of the door, facing right, and believed Mr. Robinson was less than 10 feet away from him. In a continued effort to convince the man to drop the knife, Deputy Crawford lowered his voice to issue commands, but Mr. Robinson again refused. Deputy Crawford, with his firearm in the low and ready position, observed the man grab an object with liquid in it and throw it at him. As Deputy Crawford ducked to avoid being hit with the liquid, the man ran at him with the knife and the other object, believed to be a sheath. As Mr. Robinson charged at him, Deputy Crawford fired his gun, causing Mr. Robinson to fall to the ground. Deputy Crawford then attempted to handcuff Mr. Robinson.

The other deputies in the home heard Deputy Crawford yelling to drop the knife and ran towards his location. Detective Lyman came from upstairs, approached the bedroom door, and observed Deputy Crawford standing just inside the door, to the left, with his back against the wall, and ducking to avoid being hit with something that was thrown. Detective Lyman witnessed Mr. Robinson advance on Deputy Crawford with a baseball bat in one hand, an indiscernible object in the other, and then observed Deputy Crawford shoot at Mr. Robinson. Detective Lyman later told investigators Mr. Robinson was approximately five to six feet from Deputy Crawford when the detective crossed the threshold of the room and when Mr. Robinson advanced to approximately two to three feet from the law enforcement officers. Detective Lyman also shot at Mr. Robinson.

Deputy Crawford told investigators he shot at Mr. Robinson because he believed Mr. Robinson was closing the distance between them quickly and it appeared Mr. Robinson wanted to seriously injure or kill him. Detective Lyman told investigators he believed Mr. Robinson had a knife because he heard Deputy Crawford yelling to put the knife down and then saw Mr. Robinson advancing with a bat in one hand and something else in the other, only two or three feet from Deputy Crawford. Detective Lyman said he felt he needed to stop Mr. Robinson from hurting or killing Deputy Crawford.

Detective David Cole, another member of the entry team who initially made his way upstairs, reported hearing what he recognized as the voice of Deputy Crawford yelling drop the knife. He proceeded downstairs where he saw Deputy Crawford and Detective Lyman in a room and observed a man moving toward the officers with what Detective Cole believed was a machete in his left hand and another unknown object in his right hand. Detective Cole believed the person

was less than five feet away when he heard the gunshots and observed the man fall to the ground. Deputy Kehl Chadwick of the Somerset County Sheriff's Office, also a member of the entry team who went upstairs, heard Deputy Crawford yell, "drop the knife." Deputy Chadwick went downstairs towards Deputy Crawford's voice and located Deputy Crawford with his gun aimed at someone, giving commands to drop the knife. He then observed Deputy Crawford move to avoid a square-shaped object that was thrown at him, but Deputy Chadwick's view of Mr. Robinson was obscured by a coat rack. Deputy Chadwick observed Deputy Crawford regain his stance and fire his gun. Subsequently, he also observed Detective Lyman fire his weapon.

Mr. Robinson was pronounced dead at the scene. A post-mortem examination was conducted by the Medical Examiner's office who concluded Mr. Robinson died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. A machete, with a 17 ½ inch blade and a 6 ½ inch handle was located by the neck of Mr. Robinson and a 25-inch Louisville Slugger baseball bat was located partially under Mr. Robinson. The incident was captured on the body-worn camera of Detective Lyman and is consistent with the events as described by Deputy Crawford and Detective Lyman.

Discussion and Legal Analysis

The Office of the Attorney General has exclusive responsibility for the direction and control of any criminal investigation of a law enforcement officer who uses deadly force while acting in the performance of the officer's duties.¹ The detectives who conduct these investigations are independent of any other law enforcement agency. The sole purpose of the investigation in this matter was to determine if a criminal prosecution was warranted or if self-defense or the defense of others was reasonably generated by the facts.² Any such prosecution would require the State to disprove self-defense or the defense of others beyond a reasonable doubt. The investigation did not include an analysis of whether any personnel action might be warranted, whether the use of deadly force could have been averted, or whether there might be civil liability. Indeed, state law provides that the fact that conduct may be justifiable under the law does not abolish or impair any other available legal remedy.

Whether the use of force by a law enforcement officer is reasonable is based on the totality of the particular circumstances and judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, allowing for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force necessary in a given situation. The legal analysis requires careful

¹ 5 M.R.S. § 200-A

² Under Maine law, for a law enforcement officer to lawfully use deadly force in self-defense or the defense of others, two requirements must be met. First, the officer must reasonably believe that unlawful deadly force is imminently threatened against the officer or another person and, second, the officer must reasonably believe that the use of deadly force is necessary to defend the officer or other person. 17-A M.R.S. § 107(2)(A).

attention to the facts and circumstances of each case, including the severity of the crime threatened or committed and whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of others.

Conclusion

It is our determination that when Deputy Crawford and Detective Lyman fired at Mr. Robinson, they reasonably believed that Mr. Robinson was coming at Deputy Crawford with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury to Deputy Crawford. Deputy Crawford repeatedly told Mr. Robinson to drop the knife and Mr. Robinson repeatedly refused to do so. When Mr. Robinson threw something at Deputy Crawford causing him to duck, Mr. Robinson ran at Deputy Crawford with a large knife causing Deputy Crawford to believe he wanted to seriously injure or kill him. While Detective Lyman did not see the knife, he observed that Mr. Robinson had a bat in one hand and an object in the other hand and was closing the distance between he and Deputy Crawford. At the time that Mr. Robinson was approaching Deputy Crawford with the bat and another object, Detective Lyman believed they were only two to three feet apart. All the facts and circumstances lead to the conclusion that Deputy Crawford and Detective Lyman acted in self-defense and defense of another when they shot Mr. Robinson.

Sincerely,



Aaron M. Frey
Attorney General

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