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NEWS

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Janesville, Wis. - Rock County District Attorney David J. O’Leary announced today that the District Attorney has received and reviewed the investigative reports prepared by the State of Wisconsin, Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), including investigative reports, body camera and squad videos from the Roscoe Police Department, Illinois and Beloit Police Department, scene photographs and witness statements and home surveillance video, concerning the police officer involved death (OID) which occurred on March 16, 2024, in the City of Beloit. District Attorney O’Leary also received and reviewed the investigative reports from the South Beloit OIS incident that immediately preceded the OID incident in Beloit.

On Saturday, March 16, 2024, at approximately 9:10 a.m., South Beloit police officers conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle in South Beloit, IL. South Beloit officers subsequently identified the front seat passenger as Ray Castro, M/H, DOB: 01/04/05, and confirmed that Castro had outstanding felony warrants. South Beloit officers attempted to handcuff Castro, but Castro resisted arrest and began wrestling with the officers, pulling one of the officers into the vehicle with Castro. While officers continued to attempt to pull Castro from the vehicle, Castro yelled at the driver to “step on it”. The officer inside the vehicle reached over and turned off the ignition, however, Castro then reached over, started the vehicle, and put the vehicle in drive and yelled again at the driver to drive off, which the driver then did. As the vehicle pulled away, one officer was pinned inside the vehicle by Castro and another officer was nearly struck by the vehicle as it pulled away. The officer inside the vehicle was pinned down by Castro and as the two struggled, the officer drew his handgun and shot the driver in the leg, causing the car to drive into the ditch before stopping. Castro and the officer continued to struggle, and Castro was able to break free and began to run from the scene. Officers attempted to use tasers to take Castro into custody but were unsuccessful and Castro ran from the scene. Officers made an emergency broadcast “10-78” requesting all available officers to respond, then officers reported “shots fired” and that the suspect was fleeing on foot.

A citizen/victim was working at Macktown Lounge doing general maintenance when he was approached from behind by Castro, who grabbed the victim by the neck and stated, "I want your car keys". The citizen/victim struggled with Castro and Castro then pulled a pocketknife and stuck it to the citizen/victim's throat and stated, "I'll cut your god damn throat if you don't give me them keys". Castro subsequently took the citizen/victim's keys and fled the business in the citizen/victim's vehicle.

At approximately 9:22 a.m., Beloit and Roscoe Police officers were notified by dispatch of a female who had been shot near the intersection of Hwy 251 and Prairie Hill Road in South Beloit, Illinois. Dispatch further notified officers that the suspect was Castro, that Castro had ran away from the scene of the shooting, and that Illinois law enforcement was searching the area for him. Sgt. Robert Lewis and Officer Ryan Sarver responded from the Roscoe Police Department, and each drove their squad toward the area of the reported shooting. Illinois law enforcement gave out a description of Castro and Sgt. Lewis subsequently located Castro fleeing the parking lot of Macktown Lounge in a stolen, maroon SUV. Sgt. Lewis initiated pursuit, with lights and siren activated, and Castro fled the area in the maroon SUV at speeds exceeding 90 mph. The high-speed pursuit proceeded north into the City of Beloit, WI, with officers from the Beloit Police Department joining the pursuit.

Rock County, WI dispatch provided a description of Castro as the suspect, that the vehicle he was driving was a red SUV that was taken in a carjacking, and that Castro was wanted regarding a shooting that had just occurred. A lengthy pursuit ensued, which included Castro driving at high speeds through numerous stop signs and red lights and nearly striking several vehicles. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Strong Avenue in the City of Beloit, Officer Sarver's squad struck the rear axle area on Castro's vehicle which caused Castro's vehicle to spin around ending up behind Officer Sarver's squad, sideways in the road and stopped. Sgt. Lewis stopped his squad, opened his door, exited his squad and pointed his firearm at Castro's vehicle as Castro's vehicle accelerated, causing the tires to smoke. Castro spun his vehicle around so that it was headed at speed toward the driver's side of Sgt. Lewis' squad and Sgt. Lewis fired several rounds at Castro's vehicle. Sgt. Lewis was just able to retreat back into his squad and brace for impact to prevent from being crushed as Castro's vehicle collided with the driver's door of the squad while Castro's vehicle continued to accelerate and engulf both vehicles in smoke. The impact of the collision moved Sgt. Lewis' squad sideways. BPD Officer Rodenbeck determined that Castro was a threat to the public and would not stop on his own so Officer Rodenbeck drove his squad into the passenger side of Castro's vehicle pinning him against Sgt. Lewis' squad. As his squad was being struck by Castro's vehicle, Sgt. Lewis fired multiple rounds from his firearm at Castro's vehicle and struck Castro, fatally wounding him.

After reviewing the reports, the body camera and squad video and photographs of the incident and the witness statements, the District Attorney has concluded that Sgt. Lewis acted lawfully and in accordance with his duty as a sworn law enforcement officer. Sgt. Lewis acted in self-defense and in order to protect the lives of the citizens and officers

endangered by Castro's life-threatening behavior. It is the conclusion of the Rock County District Attorney that Ray Castro was shot as a direct result of his own actions. The Rock County District Attorney further concludes that the use of force by Sgt. Lewis was lawful under the facts as presented by the independent investigation conducted by DCI and there is no basis for prosecution of a criminal offense based upon the officer's actions.

Wisconsin Statute §175.47 requires that, in the event of the death of an individual as the result of an action or inaction by a law enforcement officer, the ensuing investigation must be conducted by an investigative team from an independent agency; DCI therefore conducted the investigation into this matter. DCI reviewed all reports, body camera and witness interviews, interviewed law enforcement and civilian witnesses, reviewed Medical Examiner's findings, and collected and examined all necessary evidence.

When DCI serves as the independent investigative agency, it provides a complete report to the District Attorney for review. If the District Attorney determines there is no basis for prosecution of the law enforcement officer, access to the report as required by §175.47(5)(b) will be posted on DOJ's website:

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/officer-involved-critical-incident>

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