



Press Release

Conclusion of Investigation into the Dowd Road Shooting Incident

Carthage, N.C. (August 12, 2024) – The Moore County Sheriff's Office has concluded its investigation into the shooting death of Ramzan Daraev, which occurred on May 3, 2024, at the residence of a U.S. Army Special Forces soldier on Dowd Road in Carthage, North Carolina.

After a thorough review of the case by the Moore County Sheriff's Office and Moore County District Attorney, including evidence collected at the scene, digital evidence, witness statements, and the pattern of gunshot wounds and shell casings, it was determined that no charges will be filed against the homeowner involved in the incident. The determination of justification is based on the reasonable belief of the homeowner, considering the totality of the facts known to the homeowner at the time of the shooting, and the North Carolina Castle Doctrine. The homeowner's actions were deemed justifiable under the North Carolina Castle Doctrine, which allows for the use of defensive force in situations where there is a perceived imminent threat to personal and family safety within one's home or property.

On the evening of May 3, at dusk, the homeowner's wife, while outside with their children, observed an unidentified individual, later identified as Ramzan Daraev, taking photographs near their remote residence. She informed her husband, who was reportedly unarmed at the time and approached the individual to see what he was doing. Given the remote location of their property, the presence of an unknown person taking photographs raised significant security concerns. Unable to establish who Daraev was or why he was on the property, the homeowner asked him to leave. According to the homeowner, Daraev became aggressive and refused to leave the property, at one point asserting that he was a Chechen national who had served in the Russian military and fought in Ukraine, although investigators have been unable to establish Daraev's prior foreign military status. The homeowner reported that he then went to his residence and retrieved a handgun before returning to ensure his family's safety until law enforcement arrived.

The initial 911 call to the Sheriff's Office was made by the homeowner's wife at 8:12 PM. During the call, she stated that a suspicious person was observed on her property taking photographs of the house and children, and that her husband had approached the individual to speak with them. She noted that there was an apparent language barrier, and that the person was acting aggressively. The second call, which was more exigent, was made at 8:25 PM. At one point during the calls, the caller could be heard pleading for expedited law enforcement response at the request of her husband, who could be heard yelling to her in the background. She secured a rifle during one of the calls, reflecting the perceived level

of threat. The shooting allegedly took place shortly after the second call, just prior to deputies arriving on scene.

More than twenty minutes passed from the time of the first call until law enforcement arrived. At the time of the initial call, deputies working the area were on the scene of an unrelated life-threatening medical emergency, delaying their response.

The confrontation escalated when Daraev reportedly became agitated and lunged at the homeowner after repeatedly refusing to leave the property. The homeowner reported firing several shots in response to Daraev's advance. Under the North Carolina Castle Doctrine, the homeowner's actions are protected, providing legal justification for using defensive force.

Investigators uncovered that the only identification associated with Daraev was an International Driver's License found in his Chevrolet Spark, which was parked along Dowd Road and registered to him out of Chicago, Illinois. No items identifying him as a utility worker were found on his person or in his vehicle. At the time of the shooting, Daraev was wearing a burgundy t-shirt, black shorts, and flip-flops. The only item in his possession was a cellular telephone reportedly being used to take photographs. A second vehicle, registered to Adsalam Dzhankutov out of Illinois, was located near Daraev's. Deputies detained and questioned Dzhankutov, who was also conducting utility work in the area. Dzhankutov reported hearing several gunshots in succession around the time Daraev was shot, which was consistent with the homeowner's account of the shooting. However, he did not associate the shots with Daraev at the time.

Digital evidence confirmed that Daraev was taking pictures of power poles in the direction of the residence, which was reportedly perceived by the homeowner as taking pictures of the home and homeowner's children. Reports from the homeowner indicated that Daraev had been much closer to the house than depicted in the last photograph held by Utilities One. It was reported that Daraev took pictures closer to the home, just under a quarter mile (0.21 miles) from the roadway, but investigators were unable to access his phone to determine if they were taken but not uploaded to Utilities One. The last known image reportedly taken at the residence and provided by Utilities One was taken at 8:07 PM, several minutes before the initial encounter between the homeowner and Daraev, and about 20 minutes before the reported time of the fatal encounter. The power line being photographed by Daraev at the time of the shooting was not the primary line along the roadway, but an independent feed leading only to the homeowner's residence. Images taken by other utility workers in the area around the time of the encounter show that by 8:15 PM, visibility had significantly decreased as nighttime approached.

Business records indicate that Daraev was conducting legitimate utility work in the area at the time, although there was nothing on his person or in his vehicle indicating that he was conducting utility work. Daraev was employed by Cable Warriors, a subcontractor of Utilities One, and was conducting surveys as part of Brightspeed's fiber optic expansion into the Carthage area of Moore County. Additionally, maps obtained related to Daraev's intended work area included a power pole approximately 115 feet from the residence, consistent with where the homeowner reported first seeing Daraev. Other recovered images indicated that it was common practice for this group to conduct utility work after dark

with no evidence that any property owners were notified. Other workers in the utility industry told investigators that conducting utility work near dark on or near private property, especially during non-emergency activities, without identifying clothing and without notifying the homeowner is not common practice.

Following the shooting, the sheriff's office received multiple reports from concerned citizens of people being seen on private properties throughout the same general area earlier on the evening of the incident. These individuals were believed to be associated with the group working with Daraev. None of the citizens making those reports were aware that the persons they observed on their properties were conducting utility work.

Prior to the shooting, Daraev was encountered by a sheriff's patrol deputy at around 6:30 PM, walking along power poles near an isolated field less than a mile from where the Dowd Road incident later occurred. The deputy observed a vehicle registered to Daraev, parked nearby and partially in the roadway. Using a language translation app, the deputy questioned Daraev about his activities and requested that he move his vehicle. Daraev provided his international driver's license and explained that he was conducting utility work, although he had no utility attire. Finding no apparent violation of law, the deputy documented the encounter through dispatchers and released Daraev.

Through family and coworkers, investigators learned that Daraev is a Russian native from Chechnya who entered the United States across the southern border in mid-December 2022 and has since been living in Chicago, Illinois. Independent records confirmed that Daraev entered the country on December 16, 2022.

The Moore County Sheriff's Office is continuing to assess the operational background of Utilities One and Cable Warriors, the subcontractor for whom Daraev was employed. Investigators are also reviewing digital evidence containing electrical infrastructure maps related to the utility expansion provided to employees from a Russian cloud server, which may provide further insights into the subcontractor's activities. Efforts to access Daraev's cellular phone continue in effort to fully understand his activities and the nature of any photographs taken. Some images Daraev uploaded to a shared directory have been obtained, and analysis is ongoing. Given the unique circumstances of the incident, the sheriff's office has voluntarily kept all case materials accessible to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Army Criminal Investigation Division throughout the investigation. Additionally, the Moore County Sheriff's Office has requested an investigation by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) into the work practices surrounding this incident to ensure all safety protocols were followed, identify any potential violations, and promote safer work practices among utility workers.