

SPECIAL REPORT

March 29, 2024

Infantry Ridge Active Violence & Officer-Involved Shooting Findings

Prince William County, VA... The independent criminal investigation into the active violence and subsequent fatal officer-involved shooting that occurred on Feb. 13, 2024, at an apprenticeship training center located in the 7000 block of Infantry Ridge Road in the Manassas area of Prince William County involving members of the Prince William County Police Department has been completed. The criminal investigation surrounding the incident was conducted by the regional Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) which is comprised of investigators from multiple law enforcement agencies in the Northern Virginia area. No members of the Prince William County Police Department were involved in the investigation led by CIRT. The completed investigation was reviewed separately by the Honorable Amy Ashworth, Commonwealth's Attorney for Prince William County, for determination of criminal liability in the officer's actions during the incident at the time of the interaction. As a result of this thorough review of the extensive and independent investigation, **the actions of both members involved were deemed justified and reasonable.** In the interest of keeping the residents of Prince William County informed of significant incidents involving our officers and the community, further details of the investigation are being publicly disclosed.

On Thursday, Feb. 13, 2024, at approximately 3:23 p.m., multiple 911 calls were received as officers were dispatched to the apprenticeship training center on Infantry Ridge Road for an active violence incident of a stabbing-in-progress. Initial information received indicated two victims had been stabbed and that the suspect was armed with a knife. Within minutes, the first responding officers arrived on the scene and approached the building where they encountered the presumed suspect exiting the entrance door. Officers instantly engaged the suspect who was armed with a knife. The suspect, later identified as 26-year-old Philip Austin **BRANT** of Woodbridge, initially retreated into the building before emerging seconds later. As the officers continued to issue commands to the suspect to drop the knife, the suspect advanced towards the officers. Two uniformed police officers opened fire from their department-issued handguns, ultimately fatally striking the suspect. As officers were assessing the suspect's condition, additional officers searched the building for victims.

The investigation revealed the initial altercation occurred in a classroom within the center where several students had assembled for a class including the suspect and one victim. In a seemingly unprovoked attack, **BRANT** approached one victim, identified as a 23-year-old Fairfax man, and pulled a knife from a backpack before repeatedly stabbing the victim. The other students present inside the room dispersed as the victim attempted to separate from **BRANT** who continued the attack. At one point, **BRANT** exited the

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classroom where he encountered and repeatedly stabbed a second victim, identified as 23-year-old Elijah Islam **SAFADI** of Manassas, in an interior hallway of the building. As officers arrived on scene, **BRANT** moved to the front entrance lobby of the building where he eventually encountered officers and was fatally shot.

The initial stabbing victim collapsed inside the classroom where the altercation began, while **SAFADI** exited the building before collapsing in the parking lot. Both victims were transported to area hospitals with multiple stab wounds where **SAFADI** died from his injuries. The surviving victim was critically injured and survived the altercation.

During the investigation, CIRT determined the officers involved issued repeated commands to **BRANT** to drop the knife before he advanced towards them. Following the incident, the officers were placed on routine, paid administrative leave. Neither officer involved was previously involved in a deadly force encounter or officer-involved shooting. The officers involved had 5 years and 1.5 years of service and were both assigned in a uniformed capacity in the Patrol Service Bureau within the Operations Division. Both officers have been cleared to return to full duty.

Following the conclusion of the independent investigation by CIRT, the facts and circumstances were presented to the Honorable Amy Ashworth, Commonwealth's Attorney for Prince William County, for a separate review and determination of findings. *"In this incident, the danger posed by the direct actions of [the suspect] was real and posed an imminent threat of death or bodily harm to the officers, as well as other members of the community,"* said Ms. Ashworth. *"The Officers fired their weapons in response to the suspect approaching them with a large knife in hand, as well as their knowledge of risk to specific members of the civilian community. Accordingly, I find that the use of deadly force was both justified and reasonable under the circumstances of this tragic encounter."*

"It is clear our officers were responding to an active violence incident where information had indicated there were multiple victims," said Peter Newsham, Chief of the Prince William County Police Department. *"Our officers responded heroically to an immediate threat and were unfortunately forced into a deadly encounter. Their actions should be commended as they focused on stopping the danger and treating victims. My sincerest condolences go out to the families of Elijah Safadi and our surviving victim who continue to grieve and recover from this tragic, unnecessary incident."*

The investigation will now transition to a separate internal administrative review of the incident involving our members. The Use of Deadly Force Review Board will conduct a final review, which will examine all aspects of the incident. The Board will determine if the shooting was within policy and suggest any

recommendations based on their findings. The findings in the administrative investigation are not considered criminal and are solely exploring if the actions by police department members were within policy and followed appropriate training.

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The Prince William County Police Department recognizes the sensitivity of response to resistance incidents involving a death or serious injury, and the community's interest in remaining informed as to the circumstances surrounding incidents progress. We remain committed to the process of an independent, thorough investigation, and the separate review by the Commonwealth's Attorney when these incidents occur. We further appreciate our community's patience while information is gathered and processed. It is our goal to provide our community with developments as they become available in the investigation.

The police department will continue to evaluate this incident and will release any additional, pertinent information related to the investigation as needed to keep our community informed.

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