

PRESS RELEASE

Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2025

From: Michael T. Gmoser, Butler County, Ohio Prosecuting Attorney

In the early evening hours of December 24, 2024, at 1004 Park Lane in Middletown, Ohio, Christopher Gorak, age 50 was fatally wounded by a Middletown police officer responding to a domestic violence report. The policy of the Butler County Prosecutor is that all officer involved shooting cases, otherwise referred to as critical incidents, are considered by the Butler County Grand Jury, as was done here on January 24, 2025, to determine whether the critical incident and resulting death was justified. The Butler County Prosecutor also recommends to all police agencies in Butler County that such incidents be immediately referred to the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) for an independent investigation and that was done in this incident. The Butler County Grand Jury thus empaneled considered all relevant facts and history and determined that no indictment alleging criminal conduct against any involved officer should issue and that the death of Christopher Gorak was justified.

Although the death in this case is tragic having initially begun by a reported altercation between father and son on Christmas Eve, it is nevertheless instructive on the lethal consequences when interacting with police with a firearm. The Middletown Police Department was contacted via a 911 citizen call that two men were arguing and assaulting each other at the subject location. Upon arrival, responding officers positioned themselves at the door of the residence where the disturbance was reported. The officer closest to the door knocked on the door three times and announced police presence twice. A voice could be heard inside the residence. After the third knock on the door enhanced by means of a metal flashlight, the door opened and Christopher Gorak is seen holding a pistol and aiming in the direction of two of the responding police officers. In three tenths of one second that threat of deadly harm was responded to with lethal force by the officer closest to the door and who had announced police presence resulting in the death of Mr. Gorak by four shots being fired by the officer. Immediate resuscitative efforts were engaged by the police officers on scene and Mr. Gorak died resulting from the shots fired at him. A subsequent autopsy of Mr. Gorak determined that he was heavily intoxicated by alcohol more than three times the legal limit for motor vehicle operation and tested "positive" for cannabinoids (marijuana). The entire event was captured by police body cameras and BCI was immediately called by the Middletown Police Department to make a complete independent investigation. The expertise of the BCI team charged with such investigations was instrumental in reaching a fair and correct resolution.

In the United States where gun ownership is more common than not and mind-altering substances are more freely available and subject to abuse, citizen attention must be given to the lethal consequences of aggressive interaction with police while armed and intoxicated. Pointing a firearm at a police officer in the performance of his or her duties in any event regardless of sobriety will likely be met with justifiable lethal force and consequences as it was in this instance.