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March 10, 2025



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**Iowa Attorney General's Review  
of Officer Involved Death**

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Incident of December 15, 2024

Bremer County, Iowa

Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office: Deputies Andy Briggs and  
David Even

Bremer County Sheriff's Office: Deputy Austin Hageman

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Subject Involved: Willie Earl Washington

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## **Executive Summary**

At approximately 7:00 p.m. on December 15, 2024, an officer from the Waterloo Police Department attempted to stop a vehicle that had a brake light out. The vehicle was a white sedan being driving by Willie Earl Washington. Washington sped away from the officer, accelerating to speeds over 120 miles per hour and driving the wrong-way in the northbound lanes of Highway 63. For safety reasons this pursuit was terminated.

Black Hawk County Sheriff's Deputy Andrew Biggs located the same sedan a short time later and attempted a traffic stop. Washington again sped away from law enforcement, exceeding speeds of 100 miles per hour on Highway 63. Deputies from Bremer County eventually joined the pursuit and disabled the vehicle with stop sticks. Once the vehicle came to a stop, Washington said he would cooperate but would not get out of the car. Deputies were eventually able to get Washington to the ground, where he resisted being handcuffed. Washington became unresponsive during the handcuffing process. He was declared deceased later that night at a local hospital.

## **Detailed Factual Summary**

At 6:55 p.m. on December 15, 2024, Officer Cheyenne Shaw of the Waterloo Police Department initiated a traffic stop on a white

Ford Crown Victoria due to a brake light being out. The officer signaled this stop with her red and blue emergency lights. The driver of the sedan initially signaled that they were pulling into the parking lot at Dollar General, but once in the lot, sped through it and exited at the other end, going the wrong way onto East 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The driver of the sedan turned right at the next intersection, again travelling the wrong way for approximately one block before turning onto East Mullan Ave/Highway 63. The sedan was travelling northbound in the southbound lanes of this divided highway into oncoming traffic. Officer Shaw pursued the vehicle in the southbound lanes as well.

At the time of this pursuit the sun had completely set, and conditions were mildly wet. There had been an ice storm the day prior, and temperatures were dropping. As she pursued the sedan, Officer Shaw was able to provide dispatch with license plate information and learned that the vehicle was registered to Jedgret Washington. The pursuit continued through multiple intersections and the sedan maneuvered around several innocent motorists who were travelling on the highway, eventually side-swiping one individual's vehicle as the vehicle attempted to get out of the way. Officer Shaw continued the pursuit, providing information to dispatch as they passed various cross-streets. At one point she was able to radio to dispatch that the sedan was travelling over 120

miles per hour. Eventually the pursuit was terminated for safety reasons just south of Dunkerton Road, at the north edge of Waterloo city limits.

During the pursuit, other law enforcement officers had been able to monitor the situation and were made aware of the vehicle description, including license plate information. Once the pursuit was terminated, Black Hawk County Deputies Andy Briggs and David Even proceeded to the north end of Black Hawk County to see if they could find the vehicle.

At 7:16 p.m. Deputy Briggs was travelling eastbound on Cedar Wapsi Road, east of Highway 63. At that time, he located the white Crown Victoria travelling westbound on Cedar Wapsi Road, back toward Highway 63. Deputy Briggs was able to turn his vehicle around and headed west to catch up to the vehicle. He had not yet caught up to the sedan when the sedan took the turn lane to travel northbound on Highway 63. Deputy David Even and Deputy Briggs proceeded on Highway 63 as well, and when they caught up to the sedan Deputy Briggs activated his lights and sirens to initiate a traffic stop. The sedan did not yield to deputies, but continued to accelerate, weaving in and out of lanes of travel. As the pursuit continued north, Bremer County authorities were notified that the pursuit was heading in their direction. Both Bremer County deputies and Chief Brian Everding of the city of Denver Police

Department joined in the response. Bremer County deputies were able to deploy stop sticks near the Highway 3 exit. The sedan hit the stop sticks, which punctured the front tires, and the driver pulled the vehicle down the off-ramp and onto Highway 3, heading eastbound. The driver then stopped the vehicle partially in the roadway and partially on the south shoulder of the road.

Deputy Briggs arrived at the sedan first and sent a description of the driver out over the radio before he exited his patrol vehicle. When he approached the driver, Deputy Briggs had his duty weapon drawn and commanded the driver to put his hands up. The driver complied and put his hands out the driver's side window. The driver continued talking non-stop. It was later discovered that he had a woman on speakerphone on his cell phone which was lying on the passenger's seat. Deputy Briggs was able to determine there were no other occupants in the car and the driver denied that there were any weapons in the vehicle. Deputy Even, as well as Bremer County Deputy Chad McGee, Bremer County Seargent Sean Hartman, and Denver Police Chief Brian Everding assisted by providing cover on the vehicle.

Once Chief Everding positioned himself by Deputy Briggs at the driver's side of the car, Deputy Briggs holstered his weapon and opened the driver's side door of the sedan. Deputy Even approached and took hold of the driver's left wrist and elbow, while Deputy

Briggs took hold of the driver's right wrist. They attempted to pull the driver out of the vehicle, but he resisted, and due to his size could not be pulled out. The driver was approximately 6'1" and 430 lbs. at the time of the stop. The driver was leaning out of the car, with one foot on the ground, and yelled at the deputies not to slam him on the ground. The deputies did not pull on the driver at that point, but stayed positioned with one on each arm, while the driver remained seated, leaning out of the car. The driver yelled at the deputies that he had a bad leg and "that's why he ran." He continued to yell at the officers not to slam him on the ground, that he had a bad heart, and he couldn't breathe. As he yelled at them, deputies remained stationary and calmly repeated that he needed to get out of the car. The driver yelled he was "getting out of the car" but would not step out, instead remaining seated and yelling at the deputies. The driver denied repeated directives from law enforcement to get out of the car. Bremer County Deputy Austin Hageman then approached and also took hold of the driver's left hand. The three deputies were then able to slowly lower the driver out of the doorway of the vehicle and onto the ground. As he was lowered to the ground, the driver was facing the ground, still yelling.

Once on the ground, Deputy Briggs was positioned to the driver's right side with Deputy Hageman along Deputy Brigg's

right side. Both deputies attempted to place the driver's right hand behind his back; however, the driver struggled against the two of them. At one point the driver was able to get his hand on the ground and start to push his body up. Deputy Briggs was able to get the driver's right hand behind his back and attempted to place handcuffs on him. The driver continued to struggle. During this time, Deputy Even was working to restrain the driver's left hand behind his back. The driver was also resisting with his left arm. At one point during the struggle Deputy Even felt the driver's hand brush his duty belt and believed that the driver was going for the deputy's weapon. The driver continued to talk during this interaction, saying he could not breathe. Other officers on scene requested medical assistance due to these comments. The deputies repeatedly instructed the driver to stop resisting. They informed him that once he was handcuffed, he would be repositioned. Two sets of handcuffs were necessary to restrain the driver, due to his size. As the second set of handcuffs was being applied, the driver was still talking. Once the handcuffs were secured, they were double locked to prevent them from tightening with movement. As soon as the handcuffs were double locked, the driver was rolled onto his side. The time the driver was face down on the ground was approximately 87 seconds.

At the time the driver was rolled to his side he was unresponsive. Deputies were able to detect a pulse and a heartbeat and attempted to get the driver to respond to them by asking him questions and doing sternum rubs. They provided medical attention on scene, including CPR, until medical personnel arrived. The driver was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased. He was identified as Willie Earl Washington.

### **Subsequent Investigation**

The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigated the incident. It was determined that the car belonged to Washington's brother, Jedgret Washington. Within the car authorities found three cellular phones, cash, and medication commonly prescribed for high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. A search of the hotel room where Washington was living revealed evidence of methamphetamine and marijuana use.

Washington was on parole at the time of his death. He had prior convictions for drug offenses, eluding, and was known to go armed. His parole officer was spoken to by law enforcement. She confirmed that in the fall of 2024, Washington had complained of shortness of breath due to his congestive heart failure. Medical records confirmed that he had sought medical attention in late September 2024 due to shortness of breath and was advised to follow up with his cardiologist.



The Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner completed the autopsy on Washington. They observed no serious injuries other than those which occurred during life-saving measures. Washington's heart was determined to be double the size of the average human heart. It was also confirmed that Washington had methamphetamine in his bloodstream at the time of his death. Washington's cause of death was determined to be a constellation of factors relating to cardiorespiratory arrest, an enlarged heart, obesity, meth use, and positioning.

### **Process and Authority**

The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigated the incident, and its investigation is complete. DCI interviewed the officers involved and reviewed the officers' body camera and car camera recordings where available. DCI interviewed additional witnesses associated with Washington. DCI reviewed evidence and reports from the Waterloo Police Department, the Denver Police Department, the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office, the Bremer County Sheriff's Office, the Denver Ambulance Service, and the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner. In addition, the Attorney General's Office consulted a professional in use of force and defensive tactics.

The Attorney General's Office has authority under Iowa Code § 13.12 to assess any officer-involved death to determine whether

criminal charges are warranted. The office has had a full opportunity to review the findings of the investigation and discuss the investigation with the assigned agent. All law enforcement reports, including audio or video recordings, will be returned to DCI when this report is issued.

### **Applicable Law**

To be justified, the force an officer uses must be reasonable. Force is reasonable if a reasonable person, in like circumstances, would judge the force to be necessary to prevent an injury or loss. It can include deadly force if (1) it is reasonable to believe that such force is necessary to avoid injury or risk to the person's or another person's life or safety and (2) it is reasonable to believe that such force is necessary to resist a like force or threat. Iowa Code §§ 704.1, 704.2, and 704.3.

In *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), the United States Supreme Court held that the use of deadly force by a police officer must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable police officer on the scene and in the same circumstances. Under *Graham*, reasonableness of police use of force cannot be evaluated from the perspective of a civilian or the perspective afforded by 20/20 hindsight. The Court further stated that the fact that law enforcement officers are often required to react quickly in tense,

uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations are factors that must be considered in determining reasonableness. Since *Graham*, the Supreme Court has narrowed the analysis to focus on the exact moment that the force was applied.

### Analysis

Deputies Briggs, Even, and Hageman, were justified in the level of force used to secure Willie Washington. Washington had led multiple agencies on two high-speed, dangerous pursuits within 21 minutes. The first time Washington ran from officers he drove nearly seven miles, at 120 miles per hour, going the wrong way on a busy highway, endangering the lives of multiple innocent civilians. Then, during the second chase he fled from multiple law enforcement officers, again over 100 miles per hour, endangering everyone else on the road with him that night. These actions made it clear to the officers that he was not willing to comply with any lawful commands.

Once Washington's vehicle was disabled, he again continued to resist commands to get out of the car. He yelled at officers continuously while they stated he needed to get out of the car. Officers remained calm despite Washington's agitation. While Washington made statements that he was cooperating, he physically was not. Eventually officers directed him to the ground

using gravity, rather than force. Once on the ground, Washington continued to resist having his hands placed behind his back. The videos show that all officers involved used no more force or time than was necessary to accomplish the handcuffing procedure. Once the handcuffs were secured, they immediately moved Washington to a position on his side. Medics had been summoned even before Washington lost consciousness and all available lifesaving measures were provided until he could be transported to the hospital.

### **Conclusion**

The Iowa Attorney General's Office concludes that the law enforcement officers' actions in this incident were legally justified and that criminal charges are unwarranted. It considers the criminal investigation into this incident to be closed.