August 31, 2026

Iowa Attorney General's Review of Officer-Involved Death

Incident of July 26, 2026
Greene County, Iowa

Jefferson Police Department Officer Shaydon Thurman

Subject Involved: Keegan Dean Kennedy

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Executive Summary

At approximately 1:25 a.m. on Sunday, July 26, 2026, Jefferson Police Officer Shaydon Thurman attempted a traffic stop on a black sedan. The driver, later identified as Keegan Dean Kennedy, began to attempt to elude the officer, turning on various streets throughout town before heading west into Greene County on 245th Street. Greene County Deputy Zach Barden joined the pursuit as well.

As Kennedy proceeded westbound on 245th Street, speeds began to slow drastically, as one of the tires on the car was flat. As it continued to slow, the car began angling toward the ditch. Before the car came to a stop, Kennedy jumped from the car and began running at Officer Thurman's vehicle, gripping a sharp object in his right arm raised above his head. Officer Thurman was able to get out of his car as Kennedy reached his vehicle and fired at his rapidly approaching attacker. Despite being fired on, Kennedy continued around the officer's driver's side door and stabbed at the officer's head. Officer Thurman sustained a stab wound to his face and was able to push Kennedy off him. Officer Thurman fired additional rounds at Kennedy until he was no longer a threat.

Deputy Bardon attempted life saving measures on Kennedy until medical personnel arrived. Kennedy died from his wounds at

the scene. Officer Thurman was treated at the hospital for a stab wound to his face.

Detailed Factual Summary

On Sunday, July 26, 2026, Officer Shaydon Thurman was on routine patrol in the city of Jefferson. At approximately 1:25 a.m. he saw a black Dodge Charger drift as it turned a corner, a violation of Iowa Code section 321.277A, careless driving. As Officer Thurman began to catch up to the vehicle, he noted the vehicle was speeding and observed two stop sign violations. At that time Officer Thurman activated his lights and siren to initiate a traffic stop.

Instead of stopping, the vehicle began to pull away from the officer, turning onto various streets to evade the officer. As the pursuit continued throughout the town of Jefferson, Officer Thurman would advise dispatch by radio which roads they were on and which direction they were heading. Deputy Zach Barden with the Greene County Sheriff's Office was also on duty and made his way to assist.

The pursuit continued into various areas of Jefferson for approximately thirteen minutes. Throughout that time the car would slow down, then speed up to 20 miles per hour over the speed limit in residential areas. At one time, Deputy Barden was able to come towards the pursuit from the opposite direction with his lights

and siren activated, and the driver of the car drove into the yard of a home to avoid being stopped.

Deputy Barden then turned and joined the pursuit behind Officer Thurman. The black car continued to drive erratically through town. Officer Thurman eventually drew back so that Deputy Barden could take the lead position. Both officers noted that the driver's side front tire of the vehicle appeared to be flat and there was also smoke coming from the vehicle.

The car then proceeded south out of town on South Grimmel Road, then westbound as it transitioned to 245th Street. Between the smoke from the vehicle and the gravel dust, visibility was significantly reduced. The speed of the car began to slow drastically, and the officers communicated to each other that they anticipated the driver would flee. Deputy Barden made his way to the right of the vehicle in order to angle to the passenger side. As he did that, the vehicle began to turn toward the left ditch. Deputy Barden angled his vehicle to run parallel to the passenger side of the car, as Officer Thurman continued to approach from the driver's side.

Though the vehicle did not stop, the driver, later identified as Keegan Dean Kennedy, got out of the car and began running toward Officer Thurman's vehicle. Officer Thurman could see Kennedy running at him with a sharp metal object raised in his right hand.

Kennedy was wearing pants and a hoody with the hood up over his head, gloves, and a mask covering his face.

Within three seconds Kennedy had reached the front driver corner of Officer Thurman's patrol vehicle, approximately 5 feet from him. Officer Thurman had thrown the vehicle into neutral, unbuckled his seatbelt and opened the door with his gun drawn, positioned in the v-shaped area between the frame of the car and the open door. Despite this, Kennedy continued running full speed at the officer and Thurman fired several rounds. Even after being fired at, Kennedy continued to run around the officer's open door and lunged at him, stabbing the officer on the left side of his face.

Officer Thurman was able to shove Kennedy off him and began firing rounds at him again. Kennedy fell to the ground and stopped moving and Thurman ceased fire.

During this time, the black car continued to roll through the ditch toward the field and Deputy Barden exited his vehicle, hearing gunfire. He reached back into his vehicle to radio to dispatch that shots had been fired. At that time, he did not know who had fired the shots, the driver or Officer Thurman. Deputy Barden then observed the front seat passenger flee from the black car into the ditch and into a nearby corn field.

Deputy Barden stopped Officer Thurman's vehicle, which had begun to roll toward his patrol vehicle and then approached Officer

Thurman. Officer Thurman advised dispatch that shots had been fired, he had been stabbed and they needed emergency medical personnel at the scene. Deputy Barden could see Officer Thurman bleeding from the left side of his head and Kennedy laying on his back on the ground.

As Office Thurman was alert and talking, Deputy Barden turned his attention to Kennedy. He moved a knife from the top of Kennedy's right leg near his right hand and removed a knife sheath from his beltline. Command personnel from the Jefferson Police Department had arrived and Deputy Barden requested that he check on Officer Thurman and provide cover as they did not know if the subject who fled was still near or if he was armed. Deputy Barden then began lifesaving measures on Kennedy until medical personnel arrived. Medical staff advised on scene that Kennedy died from his injuries.

Subsequent Investigation

The Dodge Charger Kennedy was driving on July 26, 2026, was determined to have been stolen from a residence in Jefferson that night. Law enforcement had received multiple reports of vehicles stolen in the Jefferson and Scranton areas in the preceding days.

The knife Kennedy wielded against the officer was a short, fixed-blade knife with a ring grip.

Officers located a juvenile on foot in Carroll County at approximately 3 a.m. that morning, and believe him to be the car's passenger, though he denied any involvement. Kennedy's family advised that approximately a week prior to July 26th, Kennedy had indicated that if he was approached by law enforcement he would commit "suicide by cop."

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 recordings and dash camera recordings. DCI reviewed evidence and reports from additional law enforcement personnel from the Jefferson Police Department and the Greene County Sheriff's Office. DCI

also reviewed evidence from and consulted with the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner.

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.

Analysis

Officer Shaydon Thurman was justified in his use of deadly force against Keegan Dean Kennedy. The situation began as a simple traffic stop. Instead of stopping, Kennedy escalated the encounter by attempting to elude both he and Deputy Barden throughout the town of Jefferson. He continued to drive erratically until one of the tires was flat and smoke was coming from the vehicle.

Once it was clear that they had to stop, Kennedy did not surrender peacefully. He did not exit the car with his hands in the air in. Instead, he leapt from the car before it even came to a stop and began charging at Officer Thurman with a knife raised in attack. In three seconds, he had reached the officer's patrol vehicle still clearly intending to wield his knife against the officer. Officer Thurman knew he was in danger of death or serious injury and fired his weapon.

Despite being fired on, Kennedy continued his attack and rounded the patrol car door, effectively pinning Officer Thurman in an enclosed area. It was then that Kennedy lunged and stabbed Officer Thurman in the head, confirming that his life and safety were in danger. When he was able to get Kennedy off him, Officer Thurman fired his weapon until there was no longer a threat.

Conclusion

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