November 10, 2026

Iowa Attorney General's Review of Officer-Involved Death

Incident of September 22, 2026
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Cedar Rapids Police Officers Ethan Lightner and Wes Wery
Subject Involved: Travis Kirk McDermott

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Executive Summary

At approximately 3:05 p.m. on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, officers with the Cedar Rapids Police Department were dispatched to a call of a man brandishing a gun at people near Daniels Park. Officers Ethan Lightner, Wes Wery, Kenneth Allaire, and Janae Obbink all arrived within seconds of each other to a business across from the park. They observed a male, later identified as Travis Kirk McDermott, standing next to the business with an extended barrel handgun raised in his right hand, over his head, as he argued with a woman on a second-story balcony. Officers directed McDermott to get on the ground multiple times. McDermott refused and responded, "shut the fuck up pussy. I'm going to shoot you." McDermott then continued to argue with the female and did not drop the gun.

After additional commands to get down and drop the gun, McDermott began to turn toward the officers. As McDermott faced them, the officers ordered McDermott more forcefully to drop the gun. Instead of dropping the gun, McDermott began to lower it from over his head down toward his waist, pointing at the officers. Officers Lightner and Wery then fired their weapons and McDermott fell to the ground. Despite lifesaving measures, McDermott succumbed from his injuries at the scene.

Detailed Factual Summary

At approximately 3:05 p.m. on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, two 911 calls came into the Cedar Rapids Police Department describing a man with a gun near Daniels Park in Cedar Rapids. The first caller reported that she heard people shouting and looked out her window to see a man with a gun waving it at people near the park. The man was also waving around an article of clothing. The caller's dog was barking at the man, and he turned around to point the gun at the dog and the caller. The second caller was the owner of a business across from the southwest corner of the park, who reported that a man with a gun was in his parking lot yelling at people.

Cedar Rapids Police Officers Ethan Lightner and Wes Wery, operating a two-man car, were dispatched to the scene. Also in the area were Cedar Rapids Police Officers Kenneth Allaire and Janae Obbink. Officer Allaire arrived first and parked his patrol vehicle at the opening of the parking lot off of Oakland Road NE. He observed a male subject, later identified as Travis Kirk McDermott, in the parking lot, facing the building and arguing with a woman who was on a balcony of the second floor above the business. The man had a black, extended barrel handgun in his right hand and was holding it in the air above his head.

Officers Lightner and Wery arrived, as well as Officer Obbink. All parked in a row, exited their vehicles with guns drawn. The female on the balcony let officers know that the man had a gun. Officers began to shout orders at the man to get on the ground and to drop the gun, taking up positions around their patrol vehicles to use them as protective cover.

In response to the presence of four officers giving him commands at gunpoint to get on the ground, McDermott turned his head in their directions and said, "shut the fuck up, pussies." He was again ordered to the ground, and again responded, "shut the fuck up pussies." He then stated, "I'm going to shoot you." At that point the female went back inside. During this interaction McDermott continued to stand with his body facing the building and the gun was raised in the air above his head.

Officers continued to order McDermott to get on the ground. McDermott then turned to face the officers, lowering the gun slightly so that it was by the side of his head, but still pointed in the air. He was again ordered to get on the ground. McDermott did not respond verbally, instead lowering the gun even farther so that it was at his waistline and pointed the gun toward the officers. In that moment, Officers Lightner and Wery each fired and McDermott fell to the ground.

All four officers made a tactical approach to McDermott, secured his weapon and began to render medical aid. They continued to do so until medical personnel arrived. Despite lifesaving measures McDermott died of his injuries on scene.

Subsequent Investigation

The weapon recovered from the scene was a Gamo PR-776 high power CO2 revolver with a 6-inch barrel. Both civilian and law enforcement witnesses on scene believed the weapon to be a lethal firearm.



Multiple witnesses were interviewed by investigators. Several of the witnesses describe prior instances where McDermott was in the area causing a disturbance, though he had never before brandished a weapon. A review of his criminal history revealed

numerous alcohol and drug offenses, along with harassment and assaults, including an assault on a dog contained in a person's backyard. When arrested in February 2026 for an intoxication offense, McDermott threatened the arresting officer, telling him he was going to kill him, "blow his head off," and find him after work.

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. DCI interviewed civilian witnesses. DCI reviewed evidence and reports from additional law enforcement personnel from the Cedar Rapids Police Department and the Iowa State Patrol. 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

Officers Ethan Lightner and Wes Wery were justified in their use of lethal force against Travis Kirk McDermott. On the afternoon of September 22, 2026, officers were dispatched to a call

of an armed subject threatening civilian witness near a park at a time of day when many area schools were letting out for the day. Their immediate concern was for the safety of the public. Additionally, anytime officers respond to a call of an angry, armed subject they are placing their own lives in danger.

When the officers arrived at the scene, they found McDermott armed and arguing with a woman on a balcony. They all had their weapons drawn and ordered him to the ground, but he refused. His only response was to glance at them and insult them. He then said, "I'm going to shoot you," with his hand still in the air holding a gun.

When the woman went into her apartment, McDermott began to turn to the officers with the gun still in his hand. Despite numerous orders to get on the ground and to drop the gun, he did not. He gave no verbal or physical indication he was going to surrender peacefully. He did not put both hands in the air, he did not open his palm to let the gun fall from his hand, and he did not bend down to get on the ground. Instead, he began to lower the gun, first holding it beside his head. The officers commanded him again to get on the ground, but he did not. He continued to lower the gun toward his torso, with the barrel pointed at the officers. At that time, believing they were being threatened with lethal force, Officers Lightner and Wery fired to neutralize the threat to themselves and the public.

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.