

SiRT

SERIOUS INCIDENT
RESPONSE TEAM

Summary of Investigation
SiRT File # 2020-014
Referral from
Halifax Regional Police
April 7, 2020

Felix Cacchione
Director
August 20, 2020

This matter was referred to SiRT on April 7, 2020 at 6:40 a.m. The initial call to the police asking for assistance was made by a neighbour of the Affected Person's (AP) wife at approximately 6:08 a.m. that same day. It referenced the wife in the adjacent apartment screaming that her husband had a knife.

The following items were obtained during the investigation and considered in the preparation of this report; police reports from the two subject officers (SO1 and SO2) six other officers who attended the scene, photographs of the scene taken by members of the Forensic Identification Section and reports prepared by members of that team, statements from four civilian witnesses, a report prepared by an attending paramedic and the Medical Examiner's Office certificate.

Facts:

The AP's wife woke that morning to find the AP in the kitchen making coffee. The AP then went to the living room and said, "I may as well do it now". He had a knife and began walking towards the balcony. As his wife approached him, he took her phone. She observed him slashing his wrists and began yelling but he did not appear to be listening to her. She then ran across the hall and asked her neighbour to call 911. Before answering the knock at his door, the neighbour could hear a female saying, "don't do this, someone help me, someone help me".

She then returned to their apartment and witnessed the AP stab the left side of his torso. The AP then proceeded to drive the knife deeper into his body by pushing himself against a brick wall. The AP then pulled the knife out and fell to the ground. The AP's wife attempted to put pressure on the knife wound but he stood up. Fearing that he might use the knife again, she then threw the knife over the balcony railing.

The AP had been away from his normal routine of work, working out at the gym and had remained at home for the previous three weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He was suffering from increased anxiety and deteriorating mental health as result of this and his sleep pattern had also been impacted.

The subject officers (SO1 and SO2) arrived on scene at approximately 6:11 a.m. followed by witness officers who arrived within seconds of each other. Upon arrival SO1 observed a female on the balcony asking for help and stating that she was trying to hold the AP down. The AP got up and the female threw a large knife over the balcony onto the ground below. The AP was walking on the balcony and his chest was covered in blood.

SO1 and SO2 together with WO1 proceeded to the apartment and entered. The AP and his wife were both still on the balcony. As the officers entered the apartment and were proceeding towards the balcony door, the AP looked at the officers and immediately turned, faced the railing and jumped headfirst over the railing. SO1 and SO2 immediately ran to the ground level and provided first aid to the AP until the arrival of the paramedics at approximately 6:28 a.m. The paramedics pronounced the AP deceased at 6:30 a.m.

The Medical Examiner performed the post-mortem autopsy. The cause of death was noted as being the result of a sharp force injury of the chest and the manner of death a suicide.

Legal issue:

Did the police commit any wrongdoing, such as an unjustified use of force, leading to the death of the AP?

A use of force is the intentional touching of another person without that person's consent.

Conclusion:

SO1 and SO2 had no physical contact whatsoever with the AP prior to his jumping off the balcony. Their only physical contact with the AP was to provide first aid until the arrival of the paramedics. There exists no evidence to suggest that the officers committed any wrongdoing. The manner of death, described by the Medical Examiner as suicide, is clearly corroborated by the evidence of the AP's wife, WO1, and the two Subject Officers who witnessed him bleeding profusely from a self-inflicted chest wound and jumping off the balcony.

Therefore, no charges are warranted against either officer.