

State of Connecticut
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Report Concerning
In-Custody Incident involving the Connecticut State Police in Canterbury
on August 24, 2022

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Inspector General

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Acknowledgments

The Office of Inspector General acknowledges the assistance provided to this investigation by the Windham State's Attorney's Office, the Connecticut State Police Western District Major Crime Squad, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

INTRODUCTION

This case concerns the tragic death of Ryan Marzi who was involved in an intense encounter with members of the Connecticut State Police in Canterbury on August 24, 2022. Marzi died four days later in Hebron and the death was ruled a homicide by the medical examiner who pointed to an injury Marzi received while being placed under arrest by police.

INVESTIGATION

Canterbury Incident

Shortly after 10:00 p.m. on August 24, 2022, Connecticut State Police Trooper Desmond Stimson and Trooper Trainee Jessie L. Rainville¹ were dispatched to Westminster Road, Canterbury for a report of a domestic violence incident. The caller reported that she had been assaulted. Stimson arrived at the residence first at 10:07 p.m.² The encounter between Stimson and Marzi is captured on Stimson's motor vehicle recorder (MVR) as well as his body-worn camera (BWC), however the driveway is dark and it is somewhat difficult to see what occurred. Rainville does not activate her BWC until Marzi is already handcuffed. Several times during the incident she turns off the sound while Marzi is present.

Stimson exits his police vehicle and as he does so Marzi exits the house and walks towards a detached garage adjacent to the house. Marzi is wearing shoes and shorts but no shirt. Stimson illuminates Marzi with his flashlight and Marzi passes in front of the trooper and proceeds to the driver's door of a pickup truck parked in front of the trooper's cruiser. There appear to be words exchanged, although at the time the sound was not recording on the BWC. Trooper Stimson appears to attempt to place Marzi in handcuffs as he is about to get into the vehicle. Almost immediately thereafter the sound comes on and it is evident that a struggle is taking place between Stimson and Marzi. Trooper Stimson appears to grab Marzi from behind. A yell of pain is heard and both Marzi and Stimson fall to the ground. The struggle lasts for approximately 35 seconds before we hear the following exchange:

Marzi: All right, all right.

Stimson: Stay right there.

Marzi: You broke my leg dude. You broke my leg.

¹ Trooper Rainville is now known by the name Jessie Murray.

² As of August 24, 2023, Ryan Marzi was a 38-year-old Caucasian. Trooper Stimson was a 28-year-old Caucasian. Trooper Rainville was a 50-year-old white female. Both troopers were hired on January 15, 2021 and neither had any disciplinary history.



Garage at 206 Westminster Road

Marzi stands up, appears to fall to the ground again, and then stood up again. Stimson is heard writhing in pain.

About 20 seconds later Trooper Trainee Rainville arrives and her headlights provide additional illumination on the scene in the driveway. It is now evident that Marzi is standing over Stimson who is seated on the ground with his legs out in front of him. Marzi stumbles from one vehicle to another as Rainville approaches. Stimson has his duty firearm pointed at Marzi with his right hand. Rainville aims her taser at Marzi as is evident from the laser sights trained on his chest. From a review of the available video and audio, the following then takes place once Rainville arrives on scene:

Rainville: get down!

Marzi: I am down!

Rainville: No get on the ground!

Stimson: Get on the ground!

Rainville fires taser at 22:09:10 hours. For approximately 61 seconds the electronic buzzing of the taser is heard.

Marzi makes a painful cry and drops to the ground. Stimson holsters his firearm.

Stimson: cuff him cuff him!

Rainville: get on the ground, get on the ground! (Into radio: Step it up, step it up.)

Marzi moans in agony, then says, "OK! OK! OK!"

Stimson: cuff him cuff him.

Rainville: give me your hand!

Stimson: get on your stomach! Get on your stomach!

Marzi: OK

Rainville: lay on your stomach.

Marzi: OK.

Rainville: Turn around, turn around!

Marzi: I can't!

Stimson: all right cuff him.

Marzi: all right stop please!

Rainville: No, get on your stomach.

Stimson: [inaudible]

Rainville: I got the cuffs right here. Get on your stomach.

Marzi: I can't! Please. Please.

Rainville: Get on your stomach.

Marzi: I can't. That's it. I swear, I swear.

Stimson: Put your hands behind your back right now and it'll stop.

Rainville: Put your hands behind your back!

Stimson: Rainville, Rainville enough with that, enough with that.

Taser sound stops at 22:10:12 hours.

Rainville: taser deployed, taser deployed.

During this encounter Stimson struggled to get to his feet to no avail. Together the two troopers (Stimson on one knee), work to get handcuffs on Marzi. Eventually they are successful and Stimson gets to his feet, favoring his left leg.

To review the altercation as captured by Trooper Stimson's MVR and BWC, click [here](#).³

³ The video from Stimson's vehicle camera has been enhanced to be brighter and, although it has no sound, the sound from his body-worn camera has been overlaid on the video.

After Marzi was handcuffed on his stomach a woman appears on camera and was directed to return to the house by Rainville. Several minutes later other state police troopers arrived as well as medical personnel, who attended to both Marzi and Stimson. Marzi was treated for a leg injury and transported to Backus Hospital in Norwich for further evaluation. Based on the investigation of the domestic violence call and the altercation with Stimson, Marzi was eventually charged with assault in the third degree, disorderly conduct, interfering with a 911 call, and interfering with an officer. He was issued a summons to appear in court the following morning.

Trooper Rainville's BWC

Trooper Rainville did not turn her BWC on until Marzi was already in handcuffs, which was after the altercation and the taser use. She noted in her report that this mistake was due to the exigent circumstances of Stimson's injury and the threat from Marzi. However, once she turned her BWC on, she muted the sound three times while in the presence of Marzi. She muted it from 3:54-4:46, 5:40-13:27, and from 25:42-27:13 (end).

Trooper Lovell's BWC

Sergeant Brian Lovell arrived on the scene at about 10:20 p.m. At 10:42 p.m. he approaches Trooper Rainville and has a conversation with her while she is seated in her vehicle. She told Lovell:

"As soon as I drove in, I saw Stimson, put it in park, opened my door, ran. Told him to get on the ground, Stimson told him to get on the ground. He stepped forward and wasn't complying and I wasn't taking any chances."

Lovell asked her if she had one deployment of the taser or two. Rainville replied that it was one deployment. He asked her if it was effective when she used it. She said it was effective.

POLICE REPORTS

Trooper Stimson's Report

On September 21, 2022, Trooper Stimson wrote a police report. It is summarized in relevant part as follows.

He heard that Trooper Rainville was dispatched to a domestic violence incident at D&G Pizza Restaurant, 200 Westminster Road in Canterbury. A dispatcher advised that the suspect was approximately 6'4" and weighed 260 pounds and had a criminal record. When he arrived

at the restaurant a worker told him the victim had just left and returned home to 206 Westminster Road.

After arriving at 206 Westminster Road, he immediately observed a man later identified as Ryan Marzi. Marzi was large in stature, shirtless, and walking quickly down a pathway leading the driveway where Stimson was standing. He gave Marzi loud verbal commands to stop and sit down but Marzi ignored him. Marzi had a “thousand-yard stare” in his eyes. Marzi walked toward a white pick-up truck in the driveway and Stimson followed him. Marzi then tried to open the door handle. Believing that Marzi was either attempting to flee or retrieve a weapon, Stimson grabbed Marzi from behind. Marzi pulled away from him saying things to the effect of “what are you doing,” “I’m leaving,” and “I’m too strong for that.” He used his radio to tell responding troopers to hurry and then a violent struggle ensued. He pulled Marzi away from the truck and attempted to get him to the ground. At this time, Marzi pushed back against him with his body and Stimson felt a large crack in his left knee. Both then landed on the ground. Stimson felt his leg was badly injured and did not want to risk further physical contact with Marzi. He got to a seated position and drew his duty handgun and pointed it at Marzi. Marzi tried to stand up but fell. Eventually he leaned himself against the truck. Trooper Rainville arrived on the scene. Both troopers gave Marzi verbal commands to get on the ground but he did not comply and moved towards the two troopers. Rainville deployed her taser at Marzi. Stimson tried to give verbal reminders to Rainville by saying “cuff him” several times. Stimson re-holstered his firearm and moved his leg out of the way. Rainville struggled to handcuff Marzi, only getting one handcuff on his left wrist. Stimson dragged himself, using one knee and his hands, toward Marzi and Rainville to assist in handcuffing Marzi. He was able to get Marzi’s right hand from underneath his body and secure him in handcuffs. Stimson then radioed for Troop D to send two ambulances, one for himself and one for Marzi.

Trooper Rainville’s Two Reports⁴

Following the incident, on August 25, 2022, Trooper Trainee Rainville wrote a police report. It is summarized in relevant part as follows.

Upon her arrival she observed Stimson on the ground, clearly hurt from an apparent struggle and she observed a white male of large stature (Marzi) standing next to a white truck. She immediately ran to Stimson and gave commands to Marzi to “get on the ground.” She gave this command two or three times and so did Stimson. Marzi did not comply and walked toward the troopers. Therefore, in order to gain compliance, she deployed her taser into Marzi’s chest. Rainville then writes:

⁴ Rainville wrote two reports: one dated August 25, 2022 and another dated January 23, 2023.

“Once the taser was deployed, it took several seconds to have the desired immobilizing effect, at which point Ryan became compliant and was placed into custody.”

On January 23, 2023, Rainville wrote another report about the incident, this report was using her new name and rank of Trooper Jessie Murray, although for consistency this report will refer to her as Rainville. It is summarized in relevant part as follows.

Rainville arrived one minute after Stimson. When she arrived, she noticed Stimson lying on the ground with his department issued firearm drawn in his right hand. She noticed Stimson was injured and immobilized and could not stand or walk. She noticed a white male of large stature standing next to a pick-up truck. She reports that she believed Stimson to be seriously injured, in immediate danger, and appeared to be in fear for his life. She then exited her cruiser, activated her BWC’s record button, and ran to protect Stimson and provide aid to him. She later found out that her BWC did not activate. She said her main concern was keeping herself and Stimson safe and to prevent Marzi from entering the house and injuring the victim.

She reports she gave the command “get down,” and that Marzi sarcastically said, “I am down.” The report continues:

“Mr. Marzi was not on the ground nor did he get on the ground as instructed. I began to give the command “get on the ground” multiple times to Mr. Marzi, to which Marzi did not comply. I am a female trooper, 5’ 00” tall and weigh approximately 120 pounds. I clearly observed that Mr. Marzi was a much larger male⁵ who injured [victim] and seriously injured/immobilized my only backup, Trooper Stimson, who is a male trooper, larger and stronger than myself.

...

“Mr. Marzi continued to refuse our clear and concise commands when he suddenly moved towards Trooper Stimson and I, instead of getting on the ground as requested. Believing this move towards us was an attempt to either get away or continue to be combative, I deployed my department issued Taser in an attempt to gain compliance. I also knew that if Mr. Marzi injured/immobilized me, he could potentially re-victimize and cause further injury to [victim], who was a short distance away in her residence.

“I was now in fear for my personal safety and life as Mr. Marzi had already committed at least one serious felony offense when he seriously injured Trooper Stimson and could do the same to me and evade arrest.

⁵ Marzi’s autopsy states he was 6’ 4” tall and weighed 272 pounds.

“Once my Taser was deployed, the prongs of the Taser struck Mr. Marzi’s right pectoral area of his chest. The prongs were close together because Mr. Marzi quickly closed the gap between us, therefore full neuromuscular disruption did not occur, and Mr. Marzi continued to actively resist arrest.

“Mr. Marzi did not lay prone as instructed and continued to lay on his back for several seconds. I could not physically roll him over due to his large stature and violent tendencies. I was forced to gain compliance and attempted to handcuff him while the taser was activated to prevent serious physical injury to troopers and re-victimizing [victim]. Mr. Marzi eventually got in the prone position on the ground while the taser was still activated.

“After Mr. Marzi was in the prone position, the taser was deactivated, and he was instructed to put his hands behind his back. Mr. Marzi continued to be non-compliant and resist arrest by keeping his hands underneath his body and then he tried to get up.

“Mr. Marzi started to roll around on the ground and I believed he was either attempting to evade arrest or re-engage in a physical confrontation. For this reason, the taser was re-activated The taser was again de-activated and Mr. Marzi was instructed to comply and put his hands behind his back, which he did not. The taser was re-activated using the probes that were still attached

“With my right hand, I attempted to grip Mr. Marzi’s left wrist from underneath his waist, but Mr. Marzi continued to actively resist arrest by keeping his hands concealed, thereby preventing him from being handcuffed. This was also extremely dangerous because not only was Mr. Marzi extremely violent, but he was also reportedly under the influence of alcohol, he was possibly under the influence of narcotics, much larger than the troopers, and had not yet been patted down for weapons. ... Eventually Trooper Stimson was able to crawl to my location. I then deactivated the taser and Trooper Stimson assisted me with placing Mr. Marzi’s left arm behind his back and we were able to put one hand restraint on his left wrist.”

State Police Response to Resistance or Aggression (Use of Force) Report (DPS-0449-C)

The state police authored a report on the use of force during this incident. The report was written on January 13, 2023 and updated on April 28, 2023. There were several changes made to the updated report:

- 1) Trooper Rainville’s method of control was changed from “taser (warning arc or laser only)” and replaced with “taser (probe or drive stun)”
- 2) The original report listed the first application as laser only for three seconds that was not effective. This was removed. The updated report indicates the taser probe application lasted 60 seconds for three cycles. The original report listed the

subject's demeanor after as increased resistance. That was removed. The original report that listed a second application was also removed.

- 3) The conclusion was changed to reflect that the matter is still under open investigation.

Taser Download Report

The investigation into the use of force and the death of Ryan Marzi was initially assigned to the Connecticut State Police Western District Major Crime Squad. As part of this investigation, detectives downloaded the use history of the taser used by Trooper Trainee Rainville. The 15-page report shows all events associated with the taser from January 31, 2019 until August 25, 2022. With respect to August 24, 2022, the report indicates that Marzi was tased for 61 seconds straight beginning at 22:11:01 hours.⁶

Medical Records from Canterbury Incident

With his consent, police obtained Ryan Marzi's medical records from Backus Hospital. They indicate he arrived complaining of knee pain. He was diagnosed with abrasions to both knees and it was noted that he still had two taser prongs in his chest. The wounds were cleaned and he was given a tetanus shot and discharged.

Also with consent, police obtained Trooper Stimson's medical records. He was treated at the Backus Emergency Care Center in Plainfield. He was diagnosed with a fractured and dislocated knee.

Ryan Marzi's Death

On August 28, 2022 at 11:04 a.m., state police were called to a report of an unresponsive male at an apartment on Wellswood Road in Hebron. The man was identified as Ryan Marzi and he was pronounced deceased by emergency medical personnel who also responded. Marzi died in a recliner in his bedroom. Responding troopers did not note any signs of foul play or anything suspicious. Drug paraphernalia was in the room and Marzi's father told investigators that his son consumed Percocet pills and cocaine the previous evening. At 11:40 a.m. police notified the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, which sent one of its investigators to the scene and arranged transportation of the body for an autopsy.

⁶ For precision, this report will use military hours when referring to the taser download log.

Autopsy

The following day, Associate Medical Examiner Gregory A. Vincent performed an autopsy on Marzi at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. He determined the cause of death to be “pulmonary thromboembolism due to deep vein thrombosis due to blunt injury of left lower extremity.” The manner of death was classified as homicide resulting from the altercation with police. In a subsequent conversation with the Office of Inspector General, Dr. Vincent expanded on his findings. He said Marzi developed a blood clot in the left leg that was injured during his scuffle with police four days earlier. That clot eventually dislodged and moved to his left pulmonary artery leading into his left lung. When a blood clot forms in a blood vessel leading to a lung, it prevents that blood from flowing to that lung. A person experiencing this essentially drowns. The toxicology report in the autopsy indicated several narcotic substances in Marzi’s blood, although Dr. Vincent said those were not a contributing factor in his death, other than perhaps promoting sedentary behavior that could have created a hospitable environment for a blood clot. In Dr. Vincent’s opinion, the extended taser discharge was not a factor in Marzi’s death. He reviewed video of Marzi’s encounter with the troopers before writing his report.

FINDINGS

1. Trooper Stimson responded to a call of a reported domestic violence incident on August 24, 2022 at 206 Westminster Road in Canterbury. He was the first trooper to arrive. He got out of his vehicle and saw Ryan Marzi walking from the house to the garage. Marzi ignored Stimson’s instructions to stop and instead attempted to enter a pickup truck in the driveway.
2. Stimson attempted to physically detain Marzi. Marzi resisted and a struggle ensued as Stimson tried to bring Marzi to the ground using non-deadly force. Stimson sustained a dislocated and fractured knee. Marzi’s injuries consisted of leg abrasions and bruises.
3. Trooper Trainee Rainville arrived on scene. She tased Marzi, who fell to the ground. She applied the taser to Marzi for approximately 61 seconds. When she stopped the taser, Marzi was able to comply with the troopers’ instructions and place his hands behind his back to be handcuffed. Marzi was taken to the hospital, treated, and released.
4. Marzi died on August 28, 2022. His death was caused by a blood clot that traveled from his leg to his lung and prevented his body from receiving oxygen. The clot formed as a direct result of the minor injury he suffered during the encounter with Officer Stimson. The taser deployment was not a factor in Marzi’s death.

LEGAL STANDARD

Under Connecticut law the Office of Inspector General is charged with, inter alia, investigating the death of persons who die while in the custody of a peace officer or law enforcement agency.⁷ Specifically, the Inspector General shall determine whether physical force was used by a peace officer upon the deceased person and, if so, whether the use of physical force by the peace officer was justifiable under § 53a-22. The version of that statute in effect on August 24, 2022, in relevant part, provides:

“(a)(1) For purposes of this section, a reasonable belief that a person has committed an offense means a reasonable belief in facts or circumstances which if true would in law constitute an offense. If the believed facts or circumstances would not in law constitute an offense, an erroneous though not unreasonable belief that the law is otherwise does not render justifiable the use of force to make an arrest or prevent an escape from custody.

(2) A peace officer ... who is effecting an arrest pursuant to a warrant or preventing an escape from custody is justified in using the physical force prescribed in subsections (b), (c), and (d) of this section unless such warrant is invalid and known by such officer to be invalid.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (a) or (d) of this section, a peace officer ... is justified in using physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he or she reasonably believes such use to be necessary to: (1) Effect an arrest or prevent the escape from custody of a person whom he or she reasonably believes to have committed an offense, unless he or she knows that the arrest or custody is unauthorized; or (2) defend himself or herself or a third person from the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

ANALYSIS

In this case, the medical examiner determined that Ryan Marzi died of a pulmonary embolism that was caused by a blood clot that formed in his leg after the leg was injured during an altercation with Trooper Stimson, who used non-deadly force against him. Our task here is simply to determine whether the force applied by Stimson was reasonable. Given the circumstances of the call for a reported domestic disturbance, that Marzi did not obey Stimson’s instructions to stop and sit down, Marzi’s “thousand-yard stare,” Marzi’s attempt to

⁷ C.G.S. § 51-277 (a)(1). Whenever a peace officer, in the performance of such officer's duties, uses physical force upon another person and such person dies as a result thereof or uses deadly force, as defined in section 53a-3, upon another person, the Division of Criminal Justice shall cause an investigation to be made and the Inspector General shall have the responsibility of determining whether the use of physical force by the peace officer was justifiable under section 53a-22.


open the vehicle door, I conclude that Trooper Stimson's use of force by grabbing Marzi from behind and attempting to bring him to the ground was reasonable.

However, Trooper Trainee Rainville's 61-second taser deployment was a separate use of force, and although it did not impact Marzi's death, the circumstances of this use of force may warrant further review by the Connecticut State Police to determine if her actions constituted a violation of policy warranting remedial training.

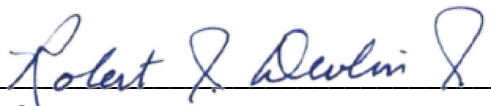
CONCLUSION

The investigation establishes that Trooper Stimson used force against Ryan Marzi and although that force did, unfortunately, set into motion circumstances that resulted in his subsequent death four days later, the minimal amount of force applied was justified under Connecticut law. The Office of Inspector General will take no further action with respect to Trooper Stimson.

Submitted, this 31st day of August 2023.



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