

**REPORT OF THE ROCK ISLAND
COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY
REGARDING THE ROCK ISLAND
POLICE USE OF DEADLY FORCE ON
JANUARY 5, 2025**



BACKGROUND

On January 5, 2025, at approx. 3:15 p.m., Rock Island Police Department Officer Brett Taylor was conducting patrol in a fully marked squad vehicle in the area of 12th Street and 34th Avenue in Rock Island, Illinois. Officer Taylor noticed a maroon 2013 Ford Fusion traveling northbound towards his squad car and then immediately turn left into an alley. He noted the windows were heavily tinted, but believed he saw two male subjects in the front seat. Officer Taylor ran the license plates on the vehicle, which was registered to both Jakarta Jackson and a female. Numerous alerts came back from the vehicle, including a weapons caution¹ and recent involvement in a “fled vehicle” report. There was also an active warrant for Jackson out of Rock Island County.²

Based on this information, Officer Taylor attempted to re-locate the vehicle by heading north on 11th Street and then turning back to 12th Street in the area of 12th Street/21st Avenue, where he observed the vehicle driving towards him and then quickly turn east onto 24th Avenue, without signaling. Officer Taylor located the parked vehicle in the driveway of 2403–12th Street, later determined to be a vacant home (24th Avenue is a dead-end street and the house is situated on a hill). Officer Taylor was parking his squad behind the vehicle when he saw the driver of the Ford Fusion, Jackson, walking away. He initiated his flashing lights for a traffic stop, and exited the squad yelling verbal commands for Jackson to stop. Jackson did not stop and began running around the exterior of the residence at 2403–12th Street. Officer Taylor ran after him and gave verbal commands to stop and warnings that he would shoot, although he did not have his weapon drawn.

¹ Jackson was on probation for Reckless Discharge of a Firearm in Rock Island County case 2023 CF 3.

² Rock Island County case 2024 CM 311, Fleeing and Eluding. Although Jackson had other Traffic matters pending in court, only 2024 CM 311 had an active warrant that was issued on 10/24/24.

While chasing Jackson on foot around the residence, there were two separate times that Jackson was completely out of the officer's view.

Jackson returned to the Ford, which was still running, while two adults, a male and female are outside of the vehicle. At this point, Officer Taylor was the only officer on scene, and when Jackson gets back into the driver's seat he closes the door, with the car running. The windows of the vehicle are heavily tinted and it is difficult to see if there are additional people in the car. Officer Taylor reached the car and is seen taking his baton and breaking the driver's side window while yelling for Jackson to stop the car. When Officer Taylor is able to open the door he tries to pull Jackson out of the vehicle, and the front passenger is seen pushing the gear shift into park, but Jackson pulls it back into drive.³

While Officer Taylor is struggling with Jackson, Jackson drives forward, goes into reverse, and then drives forward again. There is a great deal of yelling and chaos inside the vehicle, including Officer Taylor yelling for Jackson to stop the car multiple times. Officer Taylor appears to be hanging onto Jackson, and onto the car door as Jackson is driving forward.

Jackson drives the vehicle forward down the side of the yard (24th Avenue), on the hill, and strikes a street sign before spinning and stopping at the bottom of 12th Street. Officer Taylor appears to fall backwards when the car hits the street sign and is then seen with his weapon, discharging it 5 times, hitting Jackson in the glute and lower torso.

Officer Taylor then moves Jackson out of the vehicle, while another officer arrives to assist, and CPR and other life-saving measures are administered to Jackson.

The investigation later revealed that there were six individuals in the Ford Fusion at the time Officer Taylor initiated the traffic stop: Jackson and another adult male in the front passenger

³ This, as well as other information outlined in the background for this report, was recorded on Officer Taylor's body camera and squad camera.

seat, two adults, 1 male and 1 female, in the backseat, along with two minor children, a 3 year-old and a 6 year-old. The backseat of the vehicle did not have child safety restraints or seating. No other passengers were physically injured during this incident. There were no weapons discovered on Jackson or inside the Ford Fusion. Officer Taylor was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment, and was released later in the evening of January 5th. Jackson did not survive his injuries.

The incident is captured on Officer Taylor's body camera as well as his squad camera, which remains stationary at the top of the hill. Two of the adult passengers were also at the top of the hill and observed the car driving forward with Officer Taylor attached to the driver's side door.

THE INVESTIGATION

Under Illinois law 50 ILCS 727/1-5, when there is an officer involved incident involving deadly use of force, an independent agency must investigate the matter and turn overall relevant to the State's Attorney for review. The State's Attorney must then apply the applicable legal standards and determine whether the officer was justified in using deadly force. In Rock Island County, the Integrity Task Force (ITF) is tasked with achieving the ends of the statute. ITF is led by the Illinois State Police and is comprised of several members from each local law enforcement agency, except for the agency involved. ITF operates completely independently of the involved officer and his respective agency.

This review and report is limited to the legal analysis of deadly use of force by an officer. Internal law enforcement agency policies and/or officer training standards are not part of the review by the State's Attorney.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

The three adult witnesses involved in this incident were all separately interviewed by ITF investigators. The 6-year-old rear passenger was interviewed at the Rock Island Children's Advocacy Center. Officer Taylor submitted a report of the incident and his medical records were requested by ITF as well.

Front Passenger

The front passenger, referred to as "FP," for purposes of this report, was interviewed at the police department by two investigators from ITF on the same day as the incident. FP explained that Jackson was picking up friends from Milan, the two adult rear passengers, and they had just stopped at Dollar General Store and were then headed to Deerfield Ridge Apartments. FP stated that his niece and nephew were the two minor who were in the backseat of the car. FP also stated that he did not see anything or know anything during the initial traffic stop because he was looking down at his phone and only noticed that Jackson got out of the car and ran after they had parked at the residence on 24th Avenue. FP stated that when Jackson returned to the vehicle, he attempted to stop the car by putting it in park; however, Jackson pulled the gearshift back into drive and that everyone was screaming and yelling and telling Jackson to stop the car. FP also stated that the officer was not hitting Jackson, but was trying to get him out of the car. FP recalled the officer yelling at Jackson to stop the car several times, and that while the officer was hanging onto Jackson, Jackson drove the car down a hill and that was when he heard shots fired. He was not sure how many shots were fired and stated that, to his knowledge, there were no drugs or weapons in the vehicle.

Rear Passenger 1

The first rear seat passenger, referred to as "RP1," for the purposes of this report, was a male friend of Jackson's. Jackson had picked up RP1 and his girlfriend from Milan, Illinois, and was giving them a ride home. RP1 stated that after stopping at Dollar General, Jackson had seen a "cop," got scared, and pulled off into a random driveway. RP1 stated that he told Jackson to stop "freaking out," and that he did not need to flee from officers. RP1 also stated that he had a valid driver's license and had offered to switch spots with Jackson and drive the car if Jackson was nervous about being pulled over. RP1 was upset about Jackson fleeing and said he really wanted to get home because he had not been feeling well.

RP1 recalled Jackson suddenly turning onto 24th Avenue, parking in front of a house and then getting out. RP1 saw Officer Taylor pulling up behind them and heard him yelling for Jackson to stop while Jackson began to run. The front passenger had opened the back passenger doors, since they were child-locked, for RP1 and his girlfriend to get out of the vehicle, stating that they did not want anything to do with this current situation. As RP1 and his girlfriend got out of the back seat, he saw Jackson running back into the car. RP1 said that when the officer chased him back to the car that Jackson started the car and everyone was screaming, including the children, for him to stop the vehicle. RP1 heard the officer repeatedly yelling for Jackson to stop. RP1 saw the officer take out his baton and break out the driver's window. RP and his girlfriend were both outside of the vehicle and were then trying to get the minor children out of the car while Jackson and the officer were struggling.

RP1 saw Jackson driving the vehicle forward down the yard and then “flip over the wall,” meaning the vehicle went down the hill of the yard towards 12th Street.

After seeing Jackson drive the vehicle down the hill, RP1 heard a crash and then shots fired. RP1 stated that while the vehicle was going down the hill, the officer appeared to both be hanging onto the door and onto Jackson, and at one point appeared to be inside the car laying across Jackson in the front seat, without his feet touching the ground.

Rear Passenger 2

The second rear passenger, referred to as “RP2,” for purposes of this report was a female who was a friend of Jackson’s and dating RP1. She had also been picked up by Jackson to get a ride home with RP1. She recalls they were on 11th Street in Rock Island when Jackson suddenly turned off the road after seeing a patrol car. She did not know why Jackson did this and said he appeared to be very nervous. When Jackson pulled up to the house on 12th Avenue and began running, everyone in the car was yelling at him to stop. RP2 was able to get out of the backseat with RP1 while Jackson was running around the house, and she was attempting to get the two minor children out of the vehicle when Jackson got back in the car. RP2 remembers hearing the officer yelling for Jackson to stop, and the officer using the baton to break the driver’s side window. She was still trying to get the children out of the car when it drove forward down the hill, but she could not get them out before Jackson drove off. She saw Jackson drive down the hill in the yard and said it appeared as if the vehicle was going to flip over on its side, almost as if it were only on two wheels. She saw Officer Taylor half inside the driver’s seat when Jackson was driving it down the hill, and he appeared to be hanging on. RP2 heard a loud noise when the car

struck the street sign and saw it spin. Right after the car struck the sign and spun, she heard the officer's gunshots. She believes the gunshots were either during the car spinning or when hitting the street sign.

Rear Passenger Minor

The 6-year-old minor child, referred to as "M," for purposes of this report was interviewed at the Rock Island County Children's Advocacy Center, with his mother's consent. M stated that Jackson was his uncle and that he was sitting directly behind him in the backseat. M recalled seeing the officer on the driver's side door and heard a lot of yelling. M said that the car crashed and he heard gunshots.

Officer Brett Taylor

Officer Taylor submitted a report with the details of the incident that occurred on January 5th. He was on stationary patrol and saw a Ford Fusion suddenly turn away from him, and noted that the windows were heavily tinted. He ran the vehicle registration, which had numerous alerts, including one for weapons. Jackson was listed as an owner of the vehicle and when he checked Jackson's name, he found an active warrant out of Rock Island County. Officer Taylor began to drive around looking for the Ford Fusion and later saw the vehicle coming in his direction on 12th Street, then suddenly turn onto 24th Avenue in Rock Island. He noted that the Ford Fusion did not signal prior to its turn. Officer Taylor pulled up to the driveway of 2403 12th Street and activated his lights for a traffic stop when he saw Jackson running out of the vehicle. Officer Taylor began to chase him, shouting verbal commands and noted that during the chase around the house, he lost sight of Jackson as he turned the corner and was concerned about Jackson having a weapon. Officer Taylor warned

Jackson that he was going to shoot, but Officer Taylor did not have his gun drawn. When Jackson got back into the driver's seat of the Ford Fusion and closed the door, Officer Taylor used his baton to break the window and try to stop the vehicle. When he opened the car door, Jackson did not stop the car and put it into drive. Jackson drove the vehicle forward with one of the Officer Taylor's legs dragging on the ground, and he continued to yell for Jackson to stop and put the car into park. Officer Taylor got one leg inside the vehicle and continued hanging on while yelling for Jackson to stop and warning that he would shoot. Officer Taylor stated that when the vehicle was going down the hill, he feared that if he tried to get out he would get run over. Officer Taylor drew his weapon and as the vehicle struck the street sign and Officer Taylor fell out, he fired five shots at Jackson's lower body. He got up from the ground and pulled Jackson out of the car as other officers arrived to render aid. Officer Taylor stated to other officers that he was unsure whether Jackson had any weapons on his person or in the vehicle.

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE REVIEW

On January 5, 2025, State's Attorney Dora A. Villarreal was notified that ITF had been alerted to respond immediately to an officer-involved shooting in the City of Rock Island. The State's Attorney visited the scene the following day and was given a short briefing on the information known to ITF at the time.

All reports, interviews, video footage and additional evidence was requested by the State's Attorney's Office in order to review the case in its entirety and determine whether the use of deadly force was justified. A brief digital presentation with relevant video and

photos from the investigation accompanies this written report and opinion.

LEGAL ANALYSIS REGARDING THE USE OF DEADLY FORCE

A. Federal Law Regarding Officer Use of Force

In the United States, police officers are authorized to use deadly force in the line of duty to protect themselves and members of the public from death or great bodily harm. The United States Supreme Court recognized the use of deadly force by a police officer is justified where the officer has “probable cause to believe that the suspect pose[s] a threat of serious bodily harm either to the officer or to others.”¹ In 1989, the Supreme Court again addressed the use of force by a police officer in *Graham v. Connor*,² holding that an objective reasonableness standard should be used to evaluate a police officer’s use of deadly force. The assessment of reasonableness requires careful attention to the facts and circumstances of each case.

The *Graham* Court outlined a non-exhaustive list of factors for evaluating an officer’s decision to use force: ³ 1) the severity of the crime at issue; 2) whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others; and 3) whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight. 4) to effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person whom the officer knows or has reasonable grounds to believe has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving the use or threatened use of deadly force; or 5) to effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person whom the officer

¹ *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 11 (1985).

² *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).

³ *Id*

knows or has reasonable grounds to believe has committed or attempted to commit a felony if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or great bodily harm if the person's apprehension is delayed.

B. Illinois Law Governing Use of Force

Under Illinois law, the decision by a police officer to use force must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation, based on the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time, rather than with the benefit of hindsight, and that the totality of the circumstances shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgments about using force, 720 ILCS 5/7-5. Under Illinois law, a police officer is not required to retreat or desist from efforts to make a lawful arrest, due to resistance or threatened resistance to the arrest.

Illinois Statute 720 ILCS 5/7-5(a) states:

“...an officer is justified in the use of any force which he reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, to be necessary to effect the arrest and of any force which he reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, to be necessary to defend himself or another from bodily harm while making the arrest. However, he is justified in using force likely to cause death or great bodily harm only when:

1. He reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or such other person; or
2. He reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, both that:
 - a) Such force is necessary to prevent the arrest from being defeated by resistance or escape and the officer reasonably believes that the person to be arrested is likely to cause great bodily harm to another; and
 - b) The person to be arrested committed or attempted a forcible felony which involves the infliction or threatened

infliction of great bodily harm or is attempting to escape by use of a deadly weapon, or otherwise indicates that he will endanger human life or inflict great bodily harm unless arrested without delay.”

The Illinois General Assembly has placed particular emphasis to the use of deadly force by officers as force that is reasonably necessary for the defense of human life in a particular situation. Threats of bodily harm and/or death against any officer are defined as “imminent” when there is an apparent intent to immediately cause such harm and must therefore be instantly confronted. 720 ILCS 7/-5(2)(b)-(d).

C. Vehicles as Deadly Weapons

Numerous instances of deadly force by officers have involved vehicles. Both state and federal courts have reviewed the legality of not only vehicles as deadly weapons, but also whether officers may use deadly force against the driver or occupants of a vehicle after stepping in front of or otherwise coming into the path of a moving vehicle. In essence, many courts, in answering this question, have focused on the constitutional test set forth in *Tennessee v. Garner*, cited above, of whether the officer reasonably believes that he is acting in response to an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to himself or other persons.

For example, in *Thomas v. Durastanti*, 607 F.3d 655 (10th Cir. 2010), a federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) agent fired at a vehicle that was trying to elude a stop in a parking lot, narrowly missing another BATF agent and actually colliding with the firing agent. The agent fired some shots before the vehicle struck him and some afterwards. The court held that the officer was reasonable in his belief that he was in

imminent danger. Additionally, the vehicle and its occupants, having assaulted and attempted to assault the officers, may have also posed a continuing danger to others. *Thomas* is instructive here.

D. Officer Brett Officer Taylor's Use of Deadly Force

In analyzing Officer Taylor's actions, the analysis must focus on his perceptions and actions in determining whether it was objectively reasonable for a police officer in his position to believe he was in imminent fear of death or great bodily harm when he discharged his weapon.

1) The Initial Traffic Stop: Officer Taylor stated he was on stationary patrol and noticed a vehicle that appeared to avoid him, he also saw the vehicle's passenger windows heavily tinted. When he ran the license plates, Jackson's name was associated with the vehicle and there were alerts for weapons and fleeing. When Officer Taylor further checked Jackson's name, he found an active warrant. When Officer Taylor later saw Jackson driving towards him and suddenly turn without signaling, the basis for him to initiate a traffic stop was complete. During the investigation, ITF officers tested the tint on the Ford Fusion's windows and found that both the front and back window tint exceeded legal limits in Illinois, with the back windows not allowing any visible light in from the outside.⁴

Accordingly, Officer Taylor had several legally sufficient reasons to conduct a traffic stop on the Ford Fusion.

⁴ The front passenger windows had a Visible Light Transmission (VLT) of 13% and rear passenger windows had 0% VLT. of Windshield 82%. The minimum allowable VLT for the front window of a sedan is 30% under 625 ILCS 5/12-503(a-5)

2) Jackson Fleeing & Officer Taylor's Contact with Vehicle Running: When Jackson began running away from Officer Taylor there were several important things that were happening in those moments: (1) Officer Taylor was the only officer on scene and backup had not arrived, (2) Jackson had just fled on foot from a vehicle that had a weapon alerts, (3) Officer Taylor gave Jackson three separate and clear commands to stop as he was walking away. It was after the three commands that Jackson, while looking directly back at Officer Taylor, then chose to run, (4) as Officer Taylor was chasing Jackson, he lost sight of him several times as Jackson turned the corners around the house, and (5) the heavily tinted windows did not allow Officer Taylor to see how many other people were inside the Ford Fusion, and whether any weapons were present. The combination of these factors showed that Officer Taylor was reasonable in his belief that he was in imminent danger.

When Jackson ran back to the vehicle and got inside, the car was running but was in park. Two other adults were getting out of the back seat and Officer Taylor could not see clearly inside the driver's seat or the rear passenger seats due to the window tinting. There was a strong possibility that given the totality of the circumstances, Officer Taylor could not tell whether there were weapons in the car or who was in the rear passenger seat.

While yelling at Jackson to stop the car, Officer Taylor used his baton to break the driver's window, it is then that several people and the minor children can be heard yelling at Jackson to stop. When Officer Taylor opens the door, FP is seen pulling the gear shift into park. Body camera shows Officer Taylor grabbing onto Jackson and attempting to reach into car, while Jackson pulls the gear shift back into drive and the car begins to move forward. FP tried to pull the car into park again—which appears to be when the car goes into reverse for a few

seconds—and then Jackson pulls it back into drive again.⁵

The squad camera shows RP1 and RP2 trying to get the children out of the car as it is moving, but the car accelerates away from them too quickly heading down the hill on the side of the residence.

Witness accounts from Officer Taylor, FP, RP1 and RP2 corroborate this timeline of events and confirm that Officer Taylor was both hanging onto and hanging from the vehicle as it drove off and crashed at the bottom hill.

3) Discharging a Weapon: In his report, Officer Taylor states that while the car is driving down the hill, he did not believe he could let go or jump off, as the car could easily run over him. Officer Taylor also gave several verbal warnings that he was going to use deadly force but Jackson still did not stop driving the vehicle forward down the hill (approximately 108 ft.) Based on the witness accounts that discussed how steep the hill of the yard appeared, with RP1 and RP2 saying that it appeared the vehicle almost “flipped”, it is reasonable to believe that at that point in time, Officer Taylor was in imminent threat of great bodily harm or death. Furthermore, the passengers of the car, including the two minor children that were unable to get out of the car before Jackson drove off, were in imminent threat of great bodily harm or death, based on both Jackson’s erratic driving and their lack of proper child restraints in the vehicle.

The body camera also confirms that Officer Taylor was falling out of the vehicle as it struck the street sign, and it was then that Officer Taylor is seen drawing his gun and firing five times at Jackson. In the body camera, a crash is heard, presumably the car hitting the street sign, and shots are then heard within seconds. After the shots are fired, Officer Taylor

⁵ See clips from Taylor’s body worn camera

can be seen laying on the ground with his body camera pointed up at the sky, before he is then on his knees, using his radio to call for help. Jackson was shot twice in the buttocks, once in the lower abdomen, and once to the lower back. There was an additional bullet wound in his left arm, however it was not confirmed whether this was a re-entry from a different shot. Four bullet projectiles were recovered intact and one casing was also located in the vehicle.

Video images from other officers on the scene show the tire tracks that were left in the snow, and show the trajectory of the Fusion as it drove down the hill, hit the street sign and then spun around, stopping partially on the curb of 12th Street. Photos of the Ford Fusion show scrapes and damage to the front left bumper and rim above tire, which are consistent with the crash into street sign.

**OFFICER TAYLOR'S USE OF DEADLY FORCE WAS REASONABLE GIVEN THE
TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES.**

Given the totality of the circumstances in this very quick and very volatile incident, it is reasonable to believe that Officer Taylor and the passengers in the vehicle, were in imminent danger of great bodily harm or death from Jackson's attempt escape arrest or apprehension. Whether Jackson intended to jeopardize the life of the officer and the passengers in the vehicle is not a factor in this legal analysis, but the bottom line is that he did—and they are lucky to be alive.

Officer Taylor had a duty to stop the vehicle from continuing to drive down a hill and possibly run him over, or go further onto a residential street causing a collision that could have seriously injured or killed all of the passengers as well as himself. The threat against Officer Taylor and the passengers did not end until the car was stopped when Jackson was

shot. Officer Taylor gave clear verbal commands to stop and then to put the car into park, which Jackson ignored.

Officer Taylor's use of deadly force against Jackson satisfies 720 ILCS 5/7-5, and other governing case law, because the use of deadly force was necessary to protect himself and the passengers from a reasonable belief of imminent death or great bodily harm. An objectively reasonable officer in the same situation would perceive that death or great bodily harm was imminent and that deadly force was necessary.

The evidence in this case shows that Jackson would not relent in his attempt to escape Officer Taylor, and that his decision to use deadly force was objectively reasonable. The statements of Officer Taylor, FP, RP1, and RP2 corroborate the conclusion that the use of deadly force was reasonable given at the time the shots were fired.

In Jackson's attempts to escape Officer Taylor, he committed several serious felonies: Child Endangerment, Aggravated Fleeing and Eluding, Aggravated Battery to an Officer, Attempt Murder, Reckless Driving. Although Jackson was not found to be in a possession of a weapon, the vehicle was used as a weapon.

Finally, the force used by Officer Taylor was proportional to the threat Jackson posed. Jackson was in a running vehicle and deliberately shifted into drive with Officer Taylor hanging on and being dragged, at this point Jackson was using the vehicle as a deadly weapon. Therefore, it was entirely lawful for Officer Taylor to respond with equal or greater force, in a quick response due to the rapid unfolding of events. Under these circumstances, Officer's Officer Taylor decision to shoot at Mr. Jackson was objectively reasonable and no criminal charges against Officer Taylor are supported by the facts.

In closing, ITF should be lauded for their diligent work in gathering the extensive materials for this case and ensuring that all information was compiled in a professional and expeditious manner. I would also like to thank the Illinois Appellate Prosecutor's Office who assisted in the review of this case.

Law enforcement, as well as this office, has worked diligently to provide answers for Mr. Jackson's family and the public we serve. We understand that members of the community are hurting due to this incident and we extend our condolences to Jackson's family and friends, who are grieving the loss of a young life.



Dora A. Villarreal
Rock Island County State's Attorney