

February 27, 2025



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**Iowa Attorney General's Review  
of Officer Involved Death**

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Incident of January 24, 2025  
Des Moines, Iowa

Des Moines Police Officers: William Perez and Michael Hoopes

Subject Involved: Brandon Allen Mitchell

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## **Executive Summary**

On January 24, 2025, at approximately 2:40 p.m., the Des Moines Police Department received information that a wanted person, Brandon Mitchell, was at 1342 East Tiffin Drive in Des Moines. Several officers responded with the intent to take Mitchell into custody. Records showed Mitchell had multiple prior felonies, violent tendencies, and was known to go armed. As officers began staging outside the residence, they saw Mitchell start to come out of a side door of the home. When officers directed him to show them his hands he fled back into the home.

While officers cleared the home Mitchell ignored multiple commands to announce and show himself. Senior Officer William Perez and his K-9 Unit located Mitchell hiding in an unlit upstairs closet with access to a crawl space. Mitchell immediately told Officer Perez and Senior Officer Michael Hoopes that he had a gun, and they began to back out of the closet for their safety. As they were backing out, they heard a boom and believed they were being fired on. Both officers fired at Mitchell. After shots were fired, they could hear him still in the closet and directed him multiple times to come out with his hands raised to which Mitchell responded with profanity. Once a shield was in place officers entered the closet, removed Mitchell and began administering medical aid. Mitchell later died at the hospital from his injuries. No gun was located, and

it was determined that the boom the officers heard was the shattering of a large, framed piece of glass inside the closet. Just prior to officers entering the home on January 24, Mitchell told the female homeowner that officers would have to shoot him as he was not going back to prison.

### **Detailed Factual Summary**

On January 24, 2025, at approximately 2:40 p.m., a citizen called the Des Moines Police Department to report that a wanted person, Brandon Mitchell, was currently at 1342 East Tiffin Drive in Des Moines. The caller was aware that Mitchell had warrants for his arrest and had cut off his ankle monitor. She was able to provide his vehicle description, including license plate number. She was concerned for the female neighbor who lived at the residence because Mitchell had broken into the neighbor's home earlier in the month and threatened to kill her.

Dispatch relayed the information out to officers on duty. Multiple officers responded, including Senior Officer William Perez and Senior Officer Michael Hoopes. Officers met at a location away from the home to establish a plan as to how they would proceed. Officer Hoopes arrived at that location first and began reviewing the "trip notes" which informed them about the subject they were attempting to apprehend. He learned that Mitchell had numerous

prior felonies, multiple domestic assault arrests, had violent tendencies, and was known to go armed. Officer Hoopes relayed that information to other officers via radio. Because Mitchell was known to monitor scanners for police radio traffic, information regarding this situation was conveyed on a secure channel. Officer Hoopes was able to view Mitchell's driver's license photo as well.

While en route to the planning location, Officer Perez made phone contact with the original caller. That person informed him that it looked as though Mitchell was leaving the residence. Officer Perez arrived at the planning location and let the other officers know they needed to respond immediately because Mitchell was leaving.

All officers responded to 1342 East Tiffin. The home was a 1½ story home which faced south. The south front door opened into a screened porch, with a second door from the porch into the living room of the home. The driveway ran along the west side of the house to a detached garage. A red pickup truck matching the caller's description of Mitchell's vehicle was parked in the driveway next to an exterior door on the west side of the home.

Officer Perez parked at the street end of the driveway and began preparing the K-9 Unit. Officer Hoopes proceeded north along the west side of the house. At that time, a man started to exit the west door, immediately next to the red truck. Officer Hoopes recognized

the man as Brandon Mitchell. Officer Hoopes raised his duty weapon toward Mitchell and gave the command “show me your hands.” Mitchell ignored that command and fled back into the house. Officer Perez was able to observe this from the end of the driveway. Additional officers on scene then established a perimeter around the house.

For several minutes officers remained outside waiting for additional units to respond. As they were waiting, a female came out of the front of the home. She was later identified as Robyn Donielson, the owner of the residence. Officers notified her that they intended to enter the residence to apprehend Mitchell and that they were bringing a K-9 unit into the home. She confirmed there was no one else in the residence. She was given the opportunity to go back in the home and secure her animals before officers entered.

While Ms. Donielson was inside, officers were notified by radio that there had been a previous incident in which officers had searched the home for a wanted subject. That subject had been located in one of two upstairs closets that ran the length of the home.

When Ms. Donielson came out of the residence the second time, she indicated Mitchell was not willing to come out and officers had her permission as the homeowner to go in to apprehend him. She did not believe he had a firearm. At approximately the same time a

911 call reported that Brandon Mitchell was seen running behind a nearby Caseys. That call came from Mitchell's known phone number.

Officers attempted to enter the home and found the front door and west door locked. Ms. Donielson retrieved keys and unlocked the west door for the officers. Officer Perez with his K-9 unit led the entry into the home. He stayed in the doorway of the home and loudly announced "[t]his is the Des Moines Police Department K-9 Unit. If you are suspect in hiding 'Brandon' announce yourself and come out with your hands up or my dog will find you and he may bite you." They heard no response. They remained in the doorway and made that announcement again. When they again got no response Officer Perez gave the search command to the K-9 and they proceeded to clear the main level of the home. The directive for Mitchell to come out was given again while clearing the main level. They never saw any movement or heard any statements from Mitchell during that time.

Officer Perez then took the K-9 up a stairway on the north end of the home. This stairway initially went straight up, then turned at the top. Officer Perez paused at the top of the stairs and repeated the announcement for Mitchell to make himself known. He got no response and sent the K-9 to search the room. The dog returned with no alert, and Officer Perez again gave the announcement for

Mitchell to make himself known. He heard and saw no response and so proceeded to clear the bedroom.

The upstairs finished attic space ran the length of the home from north to south from the stairway, with a finished pillar in the middle of the room. Past the pillar, officers could see a bed and a dormer to the left. They located a closed closet door just to the left of the stairway. Officer Perez directed the K-9 into the closet to search while Officer Hoopes cleared the remainder of the bedroom. The command for Mitchell to announce himself and come out was given again. Initially there was no alert from the K-9. He was sent back into the closet and after several seconds began barking to alert that he had located a person.

Officer Perez used his flashlight to illuminate the closet, while holding the K-9 leash in his other hand. Immediately inside the closet he observed the narrow end of a stand-alone clothing rack with clothes hanging from it. To his right, where the leash led, was another curtain rod which was fixed, holding clothes that blocked the officer's view into the crawl space created by the slanted ceiling. Officer Perez began to move clothing out of the way and found a large piece of glass in a frame propped against the slant of the ceiling, blocking his view of the crawl space. The K-9 was sitting looking behind the frame. Once Officer Perez moved the frame, he saw Mitchell sitting against the slant of the ceiling and made eye

contact. Mitchell was dressed in all black. Officer Perez gave the command to the K-9 to secure the subject and started to back out of the closet and secure his flashlight. Mitchell initially raised his hands and said “ok, ok.” Officer Perez then started back into the closet to secure the K-9. Mitchell then said, “Don’t touch me, I’ve got a gun.” He was making furtive movements toward his waist and said a second time, “I’ve got a gun.” As Officer Perez was backing out and pulling his K-9 out, Mitchell said a third time, “I’ve got a gun.” Officer Perez immediately repeated that out loud so other officers could hear and continued to back away.

Officer Perez retreated for cover behind the wall of the stairway and Officer Hoopes was gaining cover behind the pillar. Officer Hoopes was able to see Mitchell coming toward the closet door, look his direction, and raise one arm in an aiming motion. Both officers at that time hear a “boom” and believed they were being fired on. Both officers opened fire into the closet. Officer Hoopes then changed position to the other side of the pillar and observed Mitchell on both feet crouched in the closet. Mitchell raised one arm in an aiming motion again at Officer Hoopes and Officer Hoopes fired again.

Officers communicated “shots fired” over the radio and heard Mitchell groaning. They directed him twice to crawl out and show his hands. Mitchell responded by saying, “You bitch assholes.”

They again directed him twice to come out and show his hands, to which Mitchell responds, “Fuck you.” He then mutters “kill me.” As officers were waiting for him to come out, additional officers were at the stairs and ready to assist. Officer Hoopes then told Mitchell that they wanted to help with medical attention but can’t unless they know he’s not going to shoot them. Mitchell again responded with, “Fuck you.” Officers Hoopes and Perez maintained their positions while waiting for a shield to be brought up. Once the shield was secured, officers moved in and determined Mitchell did not have anything in his hands. He was removed from the closet and officers began medical treatment. Mitchell later died from his injuries at a local hospital.

### **Subsequent Investigation**

At the time of his death Brandon Mitchell was on probation for domestic assault and child endangerment and was required to wear an ankle monitor. He and Robyn Donielson had been dating since approximately November of 2024. Ms. Donielson owned the home at 1324 East Tiffin. In December, Mitchell had attempted to change his address to the Tiffin address without Donielson’s permission so that his ankle monitor would not alert after curfew if he was at her residence. He was angry at her and blamed her for the fact that his address was not change. He began sending her an onslaught of messages, sometimes hundreds a day, calling her

names and making threats. If she blocked his number, he would begin calling from a new phone number. On New Year's Eve Mitchell showed up at Donielson's home. He continued to be angry with her. That night he took the keys to her car and would not let her leave. She was able to get away once he fell asleep and called 911. He is known to listen to scanner traffic and was gone by the time officers arrived.

The next day, January 1, 2025, Donielson call police again to report that there was a burglary in progress. Mitchell had made an unauthorized copy of her house key, had come in, and stolen items including her tablet. By that day his ankle monitor battery was dead, and he had cut it off. Officers responded to the home, but again Mitchell had fled.

In talking with detectives about these incidents, Donielson informed them that many times Mitchell had told her he was going to kill her and make the cops kill him, or that if police found him he would flee to her house and make her watch the police kill him. He said on numerous occasions, "I will make them shoot me."

Ms. Donielson was also able to tell investigators what happened inside the house on January 24, 2025, before officers made entry. She said they had not been at the house very long when he ran into the house and told her the cops were outside. She tried to tell him to go surrender, but he would not.

When she went back in to secure her animals, he was sitting at the base of the north stairway facing the living room. She again told him to just go outside and turn himself in. He refused and asserted to her “they’re going to kill me; they’re going to have to shoot me. I’m not going back to prison.” She then went back outside as he was heading up the stairs.

### **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 where available. DCI reviewed evidence and reports from the Des Moines Police Department and the Polk County Medical Examiner’s Office.

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. Since *Graham*, the Supreme Court has narrowed the analysis to focus on the exact moment that the force was applied.

## Analysis

Brandon Mitchell's actions on January 24, 2025, caused Officers Perez and Hoopes to believe they were under threat of deadly force and their response with like force was justified. What officers knew going into the scene that day was that Brandon Mitchell had a violent, felony criminal history. There were warnings that he was known to have violent tendencies and known to go armed. He was known to listen to police radio traffic and had fled on two occasions in January when he knew police were responding to the home. He had let his ankle monitor for probation die and had cut it off. When he saw officers at the home on January 24, he ignored commands to show his hands and ran back in the home. He ignored approximately seven commands from officers during the K-9 search to make himself known.

Even when discovered in the closet by the K-9 and Officer Perez, instead of showing his hands and coming out peacefully, Mitchell told officers three times he had a gun. These officers knew they were in a compromised position in the doorway of the closet and immediately needed to take cover. As they were moving to safer positions Mitchell raised one arm in an aiming motion at Officer Hoopes at the same time the glass was shattered from inside the closet. Given the statements Mitchell had made and the speed at which they heard the glass shatter, these officers had every reason

to believe they were being fired on. Given Mitchell's statements to Ms. Donielson that day it appeared that he had intentionally engineered that reaction. Even after he had been struck by gunfire and officers were offering him medical attention, Mitchell refused multiple commands to come out and show his hands, responding instead with profanity.

### **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.