



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Colorado's 4th Judicial District - Serving El Paso & Teller Counties

August 22, 2025 Officer Involved Shooting

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Colorado's 4th Judicial District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the officer-involved shooting that occurred on August 22, 2025, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 16-2.5-301 peace officer-involved shooting investigations protocol, all officer-involved shootings that result in injury or death shall be reviewed by a multi-agency team: A Deadly Force Investigation Team.

On August 22, 2025, members of the Colorado Springs Police Department's Violent Offender Fugitive Task Force and Tactical Enforcement Units were working to locate Cole Vannucci, who had an active arrest warrant stemming from a domestic violence case. Officers were aware that Mr. Vannucci had been charged with First Degree Kidnapping in that case. They also familiarized themselves with his history of violent offenses, including a conviction of Felony Menacing with a Deadly Weapon.

On August 22, 2025, law enforcement entered the license plate information from a Chevy Trailblazer associated with Mr. Vannucci into the FLOCK system – a license plate reader network that provides real-time location information to law enforcement officers.

Later that afternoon, the Fugitive Unit received a notification from the FLOCK system that one of its readers had located Mr. Vannucci's Chevy Trailblazer. Those officers contacted their partners in Tactical Enforcement Unit to determine the best course of action to safely make an arrest.



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Officers from both units located Mr. Vannucci's car and followed him to a fast-food restaurant located in the 1200 block of North Academy Boulevard. Due to the number of citizens present in the area, officers determined an attempt to arrest Mr. Vannucci would pose too great of a risk to the public.

Officers continued to surveil the suspect and followed his Trailblazer to the 1100 block of Branding Iron Circle, where he parked outside of a residence. Officers then began to execute a "contact block," by strategically putting a vehicle on either end of Mr. Vannucci's Trailblazer, to allow them the opportunity to contact the suspect, and prevent him from driving away.

Officers also received permission from their supervisors to deploy a flash bang – a distraction device - when executing Mr. Vannucci's arrest, due to his prior criminal history and the level of offense cited in his arrest warrant.

Colorado Springs Police Officer Christopher Laabs was driving the TEU vehicle – a gray, unmarked, fully-armored Chevy Silverado. CSPD Officer Rachel Cruz-Rodgers was in the front, passenger-side seat, and CSPD Officer Logan Scheppele was seated in the back, directly behind Officer Laabs.

Officer Laabs executed a contact block at the back of Mr. Vannucci's Trailblazer by pushing his vehicle's front bumper into the rear bumper of the suspect vehicle.

CPSD Officers Juan Estrada-Barrera and Christopher Major positioned their vehicle, a white, unmarked Chevy Silverado with an armored windshield, into a similar position at the front of the Trailblazer.

Upon first contact, Officer Estrada-Barrera activated the emergency lights on his vehicle and used the PA to announce that police officers were present, and to inform Mr. Vannucci of his arrest. Officer Cruz-Rodgers then deployed a flash bang device to disorient Mr. Vannucci and to get him safely into custody.

Officer Estrada-Barrera announced, "Cole, you're under arrest." Still inside his Trailblazer, Mr. Vannucci shook his head in disagreement. He then put his vehicle in reverse and backed into Officer Laabs' TEU truck. In response, Officer Estrada-Barrera drove forward to maintain contact with Mr. Vannucci's Trailblazer and keep it blocked between the two law enforcement vehicles.

Officer Estrada-Barrera continued to issue orders over the PA system, stating, "Cole, you're under arrest. This is the police. We don't want to use force against you, but we will if you don't comply with commands." Mr. Vannucci continued to shake his head to indicate, "no."

From outside of the TEU vehicle, Officer Scheppele pointed his rifle at Mr. Vannucci and announced, "Police! You're under arrest." Mr. Vannucci rolled his window down and said, "you better let me go. You better let me go." Refusing to comply, he revved the engine and attempted to free his vehicle from the contact block the officers had created.

Officer Cruz-Rodgers then attempted to gain Mr. Vannucci's compliance by deploying a 40-millimeter launcher (a foam baton) and breaking the back windshield of his Trailblazer. Without reacting to the shattering of the glass, Mr. Vannucci continued to tell officers to let him go. He then began shuffling around in his vehicle and then pulled out what appeared to be a rifle.

Officer Scheppele announced to his partners that he believed Mr. Vannucci had a rifle.

Mr. Vannucci said to Officer Scheppele, “You better let me go, or it’s gonna (sic) get bad.” Officer Scheppele instructed Officer Cruz-Rodgers to deploy OC (Oleoresin Capsicum is an aerosol containing an irritant) gas into the Trailblazer.

Officer Cruz-Rodgers then deployed two rounds containing OC gas into Mr. Vannucci’s vehicle.

Mr. Vannucci slightly opened the driver’s side door while looking back over his shoulder at the officers. He then fully opened the door and quickly stepped out of the vehicle holding what appeared to be a short style HK or MP5-style rifle. Mr. Vannucci began to raise the firearm and point it at Officer Scheppele. Officer Scheppele fired nine rounds from his MP-7 rifle and Officer Laabs fired six rounds from his 9mm handgun.

Mr. Vannucci was struck approximately eight times. He died at the scene.

Officers recovered an airsoft rifle from the scene, which bore a remarkable resemblance to an MP5 rifle.



Photograph: Mr. Vannucci's weapon



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Photograph: Stock image of an MP-5 Rifle

The El Paso County Coroner’s Office later ruled that Cole Vannucci died as the result of multiple gunshot wounds. The autopsy report also confirmed the presence of multiple illicit substances in Mr. Vannucci’s system at the time of his death.

All CSPD officers involved had their body worn cameras activated, and their recordings of this incident were successfully downloaded in their entirety. All BWC recordings are incorporated into this report by reference as video evidence of the facts.

Post-Shoot Interviews

Aside from the facts outlined above, there were multiple relevant statements made by law enforcement officers during their post-shoot interviews.

Officer Logan Scheppele has been employed by the Colorado Springs Police Department since 2016.

In a post-shooting interview conducted by the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, Officer Scheppele said when he saw the rifle, "I was scared 'cause it shows that, hey, he does have a weapon. And he's brandishing it to make sure that I am aware that he has the chance to cause me harm. So, I was concerned about what he was gonna do, and that he was gonna try and hurt myself, my partners, or anybody around us."

Additionally, he said he called for Officer Cruz-Rodgers to deploy OC gas because it would, "one, clog his senses so that he couldn't get target acquisition on myself and my partners, which I'm concerned about he's showing he has a weapon. It's showing a propensity that he wants to cause harm, serious bodily injury or death to myself, to Chris, to Rachel, to the public. That causes me concern. So, I'm trying to get rid of his senses."

He also described the way in which Mr. Vannucci exited his vehicle, stating, "He turns towards me and I can see that he has some kind of rifle. It looks similar to like an MP5 style rifle. And he automatically had it held in both hands, and was turning with gun pointing towards me. So, I fired two rounds. Um, I did not give commands. I just didn't think there was time - I don't think I had the opportunity to give him a chance at that point, because he had a gun and it was pointed in my direction. I was concerned for my safety and everybody in my vehicle, that's not to mention all the houses behind me. Um, so I fired two rounds."

Further, Officer Scheppele stated, "I was more concerned about his rounds because I was at the edge of a door. So, if he's aiming at me and he ends up missing me or the door, the door's armor, it should stop him. But there's a bunch of houses behind me that I'm concerned about. My backdrop was when he stepped out, I had his engine block behind him, and then behind that I had Officer - or, sorry, Detective Estrada-Barrera's armored truck. So, my backdrop was his vehicle and our armored truck."

Officer Christopher Laabs has been employed by the Colorado Springs Police Department since 2007.

In a post-shooting interview conducted by the El Paso County Sheriff's Officer, Officer Laabs said, "I noticed in his hand that he had, uh, what appeared to be an HK or type variant like MP5 style, uh, submachine gun. I recognized the uh, front, front foregrip of that weapon system. Um, he came out of the vehicle, and immediately focused on Officer Scheppele, and started lowering the barrel of the weapon towards Officer Scheppele, who was to my left. Um, I heard a gunshot. I, uh, thought it came from the suspect. And then I heard Officer Scheppele begin engaging him with his weapon."

Regarding officers' attempts to gain Mr. Vannucci's compliance through multiple efforts of less-than lethal force, Officer Laabs said, "The block itself is a step of use of force. Uh, and none of those were effective. Um, we didn't have any time to employ any other kind of less lethal. I didn't have any other option at that point other than to engage, uh, with my duty weapon, based on the safety priorities of not just Officer Scheppele and myself, but the citizens that lived in that neighborhood. Um, so, after the engagement, I stepped off the running board. I angled myself, uh, to the left rear of Officer Scheppele. Um, there were a lot of commands being given at that time."

Further, Officer Laabs stated, "Based on when that suspect rolled out of the vehicle, um, I was in fear for my life. I saw the weapon. I knew that I was exposed. I also knew that Officer Scheppele was exposed. I was in fear for his safety as well."

Analysis

CRS 18-1-704, Use of physical force in defense of a person, defines each person's right to defend themselves against the use, or the imminent use, of unlawful physical force by another person.

This statute states, in relevant part:

A person is justified in using physical force upon another person in order to defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use of unlawful physical force by that other person, and he may use a degree of force which he reasonably believes to be necessary for that purpose. Deadly physical force may be used only if a person reasonably believes a lesser degree of force is inadequate and the actor has a reasonable ground to believe, and does believe, that he or another person is in imminent danger of being killed or of receiving great bodily injury.

The facts relevant to analysis under this standard of review include that the Colorado Springs Police Officers who responded to the scene to arrest Cole Vannucci, who had an active warrant stemming from a domestic violence case. Officers also knew Mr. Vannucci had been charged with First Degree Kidnapping in that case. Further they had been made aware of his history of violent offenses, to include a conviction of Felony Menacing with a Deadly Weapon.

Upon arrival, officers engaged Mr. Vannucci with a front and rear contact block. They obtained permission from supervisors to employ a diversionary device (flash bang) upon first contact, made numerous announcements identifying themselves as law enforcement, and issued several orders directing Mr. Vannucci to surrender.

Mr. Vannucci repeatedly shook his head "no" and told Officer Scheppele, "You need to let me go or things are gonna (sic) get bad."

Officers deployed a 40-millimeter foam baton launcher to break Mr. Vannucci's back windshield and encourage him to comply with commands. Mr. Vannucci continued to tell Officer Scheppele to let him go.

Officer Scheppele then saw the barrel of what appeared to be an M5 style rifle in Mr. Vannucci's possession and immediately announced the presence of a weapon.

Officers deployed OC gas into the vehicle to limit Mr. Vannucci's ability to gain target acquisition and encourage compliance.

Mr. Vannucci finally exited his vehicle, raised the object that appeared to be a firearm, and pointed it at Officer Scheppele.

Officers did not have the option to issue verbal commands. As all previous non-lethal efforts had failed, Officer Scheppele and Officer Laabs – both in fear for their lives and the lives of their partners - fired their weapons. Mr. Vannucci was struck multiple times and died on scene.

CRS 18-1-707, Use of force by peace officers, dictates a peace officer's duty to use only a degree of force consistent with the minimization of injury to others.

This statute states, in relevant part,

(1) Peace officers, in carrying out their duties, shall apply nonviolent means, when possible, before resorting to the use of physical force. A peace officer may use physical force only if nonviolent means would be ineffective in effecting an arrest, preventing an escape, or preventing an imminent threat of serious bodily injury or death to the peace officer or another person. A peace officer is justified in using deadly physical force to make an arrest only when all other means of apprehension are unreasonable given the circumstances and:

- (a) The arrest is for a felony involving conduct including the use or threatened use of deadly physical force; [and] The suspect poses an immediate threat to the peace officer or another person; [and]
- (b) The force employed does not create a substantial risk of injury to other persons.

The facts relevant to analysis under this standard of review include Officer Logan Scheppele and Officer Christopher Laabs were each sworn peace officers employed by and carrying out their official duties on behalf of the Colorado Springs Police Department, a law enforcement agency. Officer Scheppele and Officer Laabs were in official police uniforms and were in the process of effectuating a lawful arrest on a felony charge.

The initial information officers had received was that Mr. Vannucci was wanted by law enforcement pending an active arrest warrant for a felony offense. He had been featured on Crimestoppers. He had a history of weapons convictions, including felony Menacing.

Throughout this encounter, officers continually issued orders to comply with commands, to surrender peacefully, and to avoid any escalations of force, however, those commands were ignored.

Officers attempted numerous less lethal tactics to gain Mr. Vannucci's compliance, to include executing a contact block, continuous verbal orders, using a flash bang at first contact, deploying a 40-mm foam baton, and finally deploying OC gas. Mr. Vannucci never complied.

As the incident progressed, Mr. Vannucci exited his vehicle and raised what appeared to be an M5 style rifle, at Officer Scheppele. Officer Scheppele fired his weapon and reported being in fear for his life, the lives of his partners on scene, and the lives of community members in the

neighborhood. Officer Laabs independently made the same assessment of the imminent danger posed to Officer Scheppele and other law enforcement officers and fired his weapon.

CRS 18-1-707 (4.5) dictates that, when using deadly force, a peace officer must believe a threat to his/her personal safety, or the safety of a third party would be otherwise unavoidable.

This subsection states:

(4.5) Notwithstanding any other provision in this section, a peace officer is justified in using deadly force if the peace officer has an objectively reasonable belief that a lesser degree of force is inadequate and the peace officer has objectively reasonable grounds to believe, and does believe, that he or another person is in imminent danger of being killed or of receiving serious bodily injury.

Mr. Vannucci exited his vehicle and raised the object that appeared to be a firearm, pointing it at Officer Scheppele. There was not enough time for officers to make any verbal commands, and all previous non-lethal efforts had failed. Officer Scheppele and Officer Laabs fired their weapons independently.

Both officers expressed concern about not only their own safety but also the safety of their fellow officers and the public. Importantly to note, this event took place in a neighborhood, on a Friday, in the early evening hours.

The fact that the firearm in Mr. Vannucci's weapon was ultimately incapable of producing death or serious bodily injury is immaterial, as Officer Scheppele and Officer Laabs could not reasonably have known that information, prior to firing the lethal shots.

Ultimately, officers made every effort to de-escalate the situation and achieve a peaceful resolution before deadly physical force was utilized. It was only at the precise moment that Mr. Vannucci raised his weapon towards Officer Scheppele that officers discharged their weapons.

Given the totality of the circumstances, Officer Scheppele and Officer Laabs reasonably believed Mr. Vannucci posed an imminent danger to themselves, to other officers, and members of the public, of death or serious bodily injury.

Conclusion

After completing a thorough review of the facts and evidence, Colorado's 4th Judicial District Attorney's Office has determined the use of deadly physical force by Colorado Springs Police Officers Christopher Laabs and Logan Scheppele on August 22, 2025, was justified, based on all the facts and circumstances of this case under the laws of the State of Colorado. No charges will be filed based on the statutes outlined previously, as well as the necessary application of ethical rules.

Note to the Media: All updates will only come from Communications when available.

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