

Fiancée of Wellington man killed in officer-involved shooting says lethal force was excessive

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Posted: Sep 11, 2019 / 09:05 PM GMT-0600 /

<https://www.abc4.com/news/fiancee-of-wellington-man-killed-in-officer-involved-shooting-says-lethal-force-was-excessive/>

The graphic features a blue background with a white and red border. At the top, it reads "OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS" in large white letters, with "ABC4.COM" below it. On the left, there is a small inset image showing a crime scene with a white outline of a person on the ground. To the right of the inset, there are two bullet points: "2018: 19 FATAL OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS" and "2019: EIGHT OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS". At the bottom left, there is a small "abc 4 NEWS" logo with a "00:02" timer. At the bottom right, there is a "abc 4" logo with "58° 5:04" and "LOCAL NEWS" text. A "point 2S" logo is also visible at the bottom left. The bottom center has a "00:05 / 02:35" timer and a "LOCAL NEWS" button.

WELLINGTON (ABC4 News) – As the Carbon County Sheriff’s Office continues to investigate the fatal officer-involved shooting that took place Tuesday evening, the fiancée of the Wellington man who was killed said she witnessed the incident and believes lethal force was excessive and unnecessary.

According to the sheriff’s office, a Wellington City police officer responded to a call around 7 p.m. Tuesday of a suicidal man near 900 E Railroad Avenue by Knight Ideal Community Fishing Pond. The man was later identified as 26-year-old Bobby Ray Duckworth, of Wellington.

On Wednesday, investigators would only confirm that the altercation resulted in Duckworth sustaining fatal injuries. They declined to answer questions about the events leading up to the fatal shooting, how many shots were fired, how many officers responded to the scene, the background of the responding officer, and if any de-escalation tactics were used while the investigation was still pending.

Duckworth’s fiancé, Sydney Fernandez, told ABC4 News Wednesday that she witnessed the entire incident.

“Earlier that day, he called and said he was sorry and that he loved me, he loved our kids, and that he was done,” said Fernandez. “I rushed over here [Knight Ideal Community Fishing Pond] and tried tackling the knife out of his arms. I wrestled with him for about 5 minutes, but I couldn’t get it from him.”

Fernandez said her niece called police, but the incident didn’t end in the way she had hoped for.

“My eyes never left Bobby. An officer rolled up on the other side of the train tracks near the pond. He was hollering at Bobby and said, ‘Let’s talk. Drop the knife.’ He had Bobby turn around. One shot was fired and then Bobby was down,” she said. “There was about a 40-second pause and then the officer fired five more shots and Bobby was gone.”

She estimated there was approximately a 70-yard distance between Duckworth and the responding officer. She said he didn’t have a gun, only a knife in his hand.

“There was absolutely no reason for the cop to fire. Bobby needed help, not to be killed,” said Fernandez. “He wasn’t a threat. The cop wasn’t in danger. In order for the cop to be in danger, Bobby would have to jump a fence, go through the gully, go through trees and bushes and up a steep incline to the tracks.”

Fernandez said Duckworth was just days away from receiving mental health treatment and believes the officer failed to exercise proper de-escalation tactics.

“Mental health isn’t a joke. Had that officer utilized what he was taught to do in situations like these, Bobby would be alive. He’d be sitting at the hospital, getting the help he needs,” she said tearfully. “Everybody needs to know what a wonderful, helpful, loving, caring guy he was. He was a good man to me and my kids.”

Duckworth’s mother, Carolyn Bettfreund and fiancé, Sydney Fernandez

Still in shock and traumatized by what she witnessed, Fernandez said she is speaking out to give Duckworth a voice.

“He needs justice. I don’t want this to be swept under the rug because I don’t want this to happen to anyone else. I will fight tooth and nail. I won’t stop until Bobby gets what he deserves,” she said.

The officer was placed on paid administrative leave per Wellington City police. The incident is currently being investigated by the Carbon County Sheriff’s Office in conjunction with Price City Police Department and the Emery County Sheriff’s Office. Investigators said body camera footage and other evidence is currently being reviewed before the case is turned over to the county attorney.

WHAT OTHERS ARE CLICKING ON: