

PLUMAS BANK ROBBERY - RPD CASE #09-80096
Press Statement - Chief Peter Hansen
Wednesday, January 6, 2010

The Redding Police Department has conducted an independent administrative investigation into the actions of the Redding police officers on December 7, 2009. After reviewing the information provided by the criminal investigation, as well as administrative interviews conducted with the involved officers, I have concluded the officers acted within Redding Police Department policy when they chose to use deadly force during this incident. The officers' actions were justified and were based on their perceptions that their lives and the lives of fellow officers were in immediate danger of serious injury or death.

Every day, officers from the Redding Police Department place themselves in harm's way to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Redding. On this particular day, a violent suspect committed an armed robbery at the Plumas County Bank on Civic Center Drive. He threatened the employees who were inside the bank. He fled the bank and was quickly located by the swift actions of the Redding Police Department. When confronted by officers, he was given an opportunity to surrender. The suspect chose not to surrender, rather fled the scene in an attempt to evade officers. During the foot pursuit, officers deployed a highly-trained canine in an attempt to apprehend the suspect. When caught by the dog, the suspect fought with the dog, and was given another opportunity to surrender to the officers as there were numerous commands and orders loudly given. The suspect chose not to surrender, instead continued to fight with the dog, and then pointed the handgun directly at police officers. The officers had no choice but to protect themselves and each other from what they perceived to be an immediate deadly threat. There was no other option.

The law allows officers to use reasonable force to overcome resistance and to protect themselves from harm. It is the expectation of this department that officers use force when necessary. The reasonableness of the level of force is based on the law, the officers' training and experience, and their perception of the level of danger to the community.

I have compassion for the family of the suspect. It is unfortunate they have to suffer. However, the suspect made a series of tragic decisions beginning when he chose to come to Redding to commit his crime; and it appears he planned to commit several other robberies in our community. On December 7, he decided to commit an armed robbery at the bank. After he was cornered, he made the decision not to surrender. After he was apprehended by the police dog, he decided not to obey commands and submit to our efforts to arrest him. His final decision was to threaten the officers' lives.

Through our firearms training program, we strive to minimize the serious potential of negative consequences of any shooting. When an officer makes the decision to utilize deadly force, he makes this decision on his own. The five officers on scene who made the decision to use deadly force, each came to the conclusion at exactly the same moment, operating independently from each other. All five officers decided that deadly force was necessary in this situation. In less time than it takes for me to finish this sentence, the officers made the decision to use deadly force, discharged their weapons, and stopped firing once the threat was over. It is the officers' duty to continue to use appropriate levels of force until the threat has been overcome and is no longer posing a danger.

The Redding Police Department trains actively in firearms. We train significantly more than is required by State mandates. The issue of accuracy, stray rounds, and the environment are stressed to officers during this training. We will continue to address this as an issue in our training in the future. It is my hope that the community realizes this is real life with real people shooting at a moving object, not a stationary paper target at a shooting range. This was a dangerous person whose actions were intended to pose a threat to the officers. This is an emotionally and physiologically challenging event. Decisions had to be made in an instant. In this particular case, I know the officers made the right decision.

The officers involved in this incident did have the safety of the community as the paramount issue in their minds. Each of the officers expressed concern for their own safety and that of fellow officers, as well as for the safety of the police canine who was trying to apprehend the suspect. The officers were also well aware of their environment and described to the investigators what was down range from the suspect. At the moment the shooting occurred, the officers believed there were no innocent bystanders in the direction they fired. Conversely, each officer knew there were innocent civilians behind them at the car wash, the car dealership, city hall, and on Cypress Avenue. This was the direction the suspect was pointing his weapon.

Immediately after the shooting ceased, the officers went to the suspect and attempted to render first aid. Their first action was to call for medical assistance. Immediately thereafter, the second action the officers took was to disperse officers into the surrounding area to determine if there was any collateral damage caused by the stray rounds from the shooting. The safety of the community was the most important thing on the minds of these officers and the other officers on scene.

It is my opinion that the officers in this case acted courageously in their efforts to apprehend a suspect who had just committed a violent crime. I stand by the actions of the officers who were involved in this situation, and I am grateful that no one other than the suspect was injured or killed.