



August 25, 2021

Interim Chief Adrian Diaz  
Seattle Police Department  
PO Box 34986  
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Diaz:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

**Case Number**

- 2020OPA-0519 / 2021COMP-0039

**Topic**

- Responding to Subjects with Knives

**Summary**

- It was alleged that the named employee (NE) used impermissible deadly force on a person in crisis brandishing a knife.

**Analysis**

- Multiple 911 callers reported being chased and threatened by a subject with a knife. Initial reports indicated the subject was likely suffering from a mental health crisis.
- The NE parked his patrol vehicle in the path of the subject and exited the vehicle with his K-9. The NE—with his K-9—advanced toward the subject while ordering the subject to get on the ground. In the span of less than three seconds, an officer deployed their taser at the subject, the subject lifted the knife into the air, turned and lunged toward the NE with the knife, and the NE and another officer opened fire.
- [SPD Policy 8.200-POL-4](#) states: “Deadly force may only be used in circumstances where threat of deadly or serious physical injury to the officer or others is imminent.”
- Once the subject brandished the knife and lunged toward the NE, OPA found that the threat of serious harm to officers was imminent and therefore the use of deadly force in that instant was consistent with policy. However, this result could have been avoided, and the Department needs to come up with innovative tactics and training that give officers the tools to make sure that this never happens again.

**Recommendation(s)**

- Revamp SPD training for responding to subjects with knives. Incorporate dynamic, outdoor role-playing exercises involving subjects with knives who are either moving toward or away from officers. OPA is committed to working with SPD to build out these training scenarios using past and current cases. In making this recommendation, OPA recognizes SPD’s current financial and personnel limitations. OPA accordingly urges City leadership to properly fund SPD’s development of this training.
- Partner with OIG and OPA to conduct a national/international survey of other agencies’ tactics for dealing with subjects with knives.



**Seattle Office of  
Police Accountability**

---

- Research and test other less-lethal tools (e.g., Bola Wrap, net gun) to supplement SPD's existing equipment which may reduce the use of deadly force.
- Set the expectation that shootings in these types of cases will not occur again, and work toward that goal.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

*AM*

Andrew Myerberg  
Director, Office of Police Accountability