

ASIRT DECISION

**IN THE MATTER OF AN RCMP SHOOTING ON
FEBRUARY 4, 2025**

Acting Executive Director: Matthew Block

File No.: 2025-0003(S)

Date of Release: April 15, 2026

Introduction

On February 4, 2025, pursuant to s. 46.1 of the *Police Act*, the Director of Law Enforcement directed the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) to investigate a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) shooting that occurred that morning. An officer shot at the affected person (AP) in the context of a call for service involving a male American citizen who fled a secondary screening at the Coutts Border Crossing and illegally drove into Canada. This investigation began prior to the establishment of the Police Review Commission on December 1, 2025, and associated changes to the *Police Act*.

ASIRT designated one subject officer and provided notice to him. ASIRT's investigation is now complete.

ASIRT's Investigation

ASIRT's investigation was comprehensive and thorough, conducted using current investigative protocols, and in accordance with the principles of major case management.

ASIRT investigators interviewed four civilian witnesses. They also obtained the reports or notes of five peace officers with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the Alberta Sheriff Highway Patrol.

ASIRT investigators interviewed ten police officers, including the subject officer (SO). They also reviewed the written report and notes of five additional officers. The witness officers included the following:

Witness Officer #1 (WO1) – RCMP officer who conducted a traffic stop and was involved in the initial vehicle pursuit of the AP;

Witness Officer #2 (WO2) – RCMP officer who was the lead vehicle during most of the vehicle pursuit of the AP and also pursued the AP on foot;

Witness Officer #3 (WO3) – RCMP officer who used a tactical vehicle intervention technique on the AP's vehicle and also pursued the AP on foot and deployed his police service dog (PSD);
and

Witness Officer #4 (WO4) – RCMP officer who pursued the AP on foot.

ASIRT investigators reviewed all available video of the incident, including video from 15 police or Alberta Sheriff vehicles (Watchguard system is equipped with forward-facing and rear-facing cameras), video from the CBSA of the Coutts border crossing, and cellphone videos taken by a civilian witness.

ASIRT investigators reviewed all relevant radio transmissions from the incident.

ASIRT investigators also oversaw a scene examination conducted by members of the RCMP Forensic Identification Section (FIS).

Circumstances Surrounding the Incident

On February 4, 2025, at 7:32 a.m., the AP attended the Canadian Port of Entry in Coutts, Alberta. A CBSA officer referred the AP for a secondary screening and directed the AP to turn his vehicle into a designated area. At 7:37 a.m., the AP drove into Canada without stopping for the secondary inspection.

The RCMP and Alberta Sheriffs were notified and were provided with details of the AP's vehicle and information that the AP had charges pending in the United States relating to theft of a firearm and

assaulting a peace officer.

The vehicle being driven by the AP was located by WO1 at 8:16 a.m. and a traffic stop was initiated. The AP stopped his vehicle and opened his driver's side door. He was directed to exit and step back towards WO1. The AP instead closed his door and drove away northbound on Highway 4. The pursuit reached speeds of up to 140 km/h. WO1 discontinued his pursuit after a short distance. Based on his observations, WO1 conveyed over the police radio that it was likely that the situation would be an officer safety issue and would require a high-risk takedown.

At 8:22 a.m., WO2 observed the AP driving northbound on Highway 4. WO2 began pursuing the AP with his emergency equipment activated and was joined by several other officers, including the SO. For over an hour, the AP continued to drive at speeds between 120-150 km/h, as he drove along various highways towards the city of Lethbridge before heading back southbound on Highway 4 and into the town of Raymond. WO2 observed the AP holding a gun towards his head as he drove and provided an update over the police radio.

Two tire deflation device (TDD) deployments were unsuccessfully attempted by WO1 and another officer along the AP's route. Although the AP became temporarily stuck in a ditch while avoiding the first TDD, he was able to free the vehicle in short order.

At 9:24 a.m., the AP approached the American side of the Coutts border and found that it was completely blocked. He braked and turned his vehicle around to drive northbound in the southbound lanes of Highway 4. WO3 implemented a tactical vehicle intervention technique whereby he drove his unmarked police vehicle into the driver's side of the AP's vehicle, trying to pin the vehicle against a concrete wall (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - W03 attempted to pin the AP's vehicle against the concrete wall as it began driving northbound in the southbound lanes at the United States border. Source: WatchGuard video from W02's police vehicle.

The AP fled from the collision and was observed to still be holding a gun to his head (Figure 2).



Figure 2 - The AP held a gun in his right hand and pointed it at the right side of his head (circled in green) after WO3's police vehicle struck the AP's vehicle. Source: WatchGuard video from WO3's police vehicle.

The AP continued driving northbound in the southbound lanes of Highway 4 at speeds in excess of 130 km/h. There was minimal traffic, and officers had blocked access to the highway at various points. The AP was noted to slow down somewhat and take evasive steps in the face of any oncoming traffic. At one point, he narrowly avoided a collision where two semi-trucks were travelling side-by-side; however, one was able to move over just in time for the AP to safely pass. The AP also later changed lanes to avoid an oncoming snowplow that manoeuvred over onto the shoulder to give way.

Another TDD was set up across all lanes of Highway 4. At 9:36 a.m., the AP drove over the TDD, and his rear driver's side tire began deflating. The AP continued driving but was having difficulty maintaining traction on the road and began slowing down. At 9:38 a.m., the AP drove into the ditch and came to a stop.

The AP exited the vehicle via the passenger door as his driver's door was damaged from the earlier impact with W03's vehicle and could not be opened. He held a gun to the right side of his head as he fled from police on foot (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - The AP exited the passenger door of his vehicle and held a gun to the right side of his head. Source: WatchGuard video from the SO's police vehicle.

The AP ignored police commands to, “get on the ground,” and continued running through the snow-covered ditch, across railway tracks, towards a nearby residence (Figure 4).



Figure 4 - The AP (circled in blue) ran towards a nearby residence, with several officers including the SO (circled in yellow) in pursuit. Source: WatchGuard video from a witness officer's vehicle.

The SO, armed with his shotgun, and several other officers, including W03 and his PSD, pursued the AP on foot. The SO fired a single shot from his shotgun as the AP was approaching the residence (Figure 5).



Figure 5 - The SO (circled in yellow) fired a single shot at the AP, who is off camera and close to a nearby residence. Source: WatchGuard video from the SO's vehicle.

The AP ran around the house, through a wooded area, and out onto a range road on the south side of the property. He then continued running along the road. WO3 caught up and used a loudhailer to give commands to the AP to, "get on the ground," and advised him that he was under arrest. The AP was warned that a failure to comply could result in him being shot.

The AP did not react to those commands and continued running down the road, into a ditch, and climbed a barbed-wire fence into a field with neighbouring homes (Figure 6).



Figure 6 - The AP climbed over a barbed-wire fence and ran into a field.

WO2, WO3 and his PSD entered the field. At 9:46 a.m., WO3 deployed his PSD from approximately 50 metres away. As soon as the PSD engaged the AP on his left forearm, the AP shot himself in the head.

The AP's firearm was later determined to be a .45 calibre Smith and Wesson semi-automatic handgun that had previously been reported stolen in the United States.

Autopsy

An Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) pathologist performed an autopsy on the AP. The AP sustained a single gunshot wound to the right side of his head. The AP was also observed to have cuts, bruises, and scrapes on his left forearm, believed to be caused by the canine intervention, and smaller bruises on his lower extremities. The pathologist, in his report of May 9, 2025, concluded that the immediate cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head and the manner of death was classified as a suicide.

Toxicology results showed the AP ingested alcohol, cocaine, MDMA, ketamine, and LSD sometime before death.

The report also referenced that the AP's medical history included progressive paranoid-schizophrenia-like behaviours, constant delusions of persecution, and multiple mental health hospital admissions.

Civilian Witnesses

ASIRT investigators interviewed four civilian witnesses. These witnesses each observed the police pursuit of the AP's vehicle along Highway 4, both before and after the AP turned around at the United States border. Three of these witnesses confirmed that the AP ran through their property after abandoning his vehicle in a ditch on the side of the highway, with police in pursuit. As he ran, he was observed to be holding something in his right hand, which was held near the side of his head. They did not hear any gunshot.

Subject Officer

The SO provided a written statement and submitted to an interview with ASIRT notwithstanding his entitlement to rely on his right to silence. He provided a full account of the incident, with the below areas being particularly relevant to ASIRT's investigation.

The SO confirmed that he was aware of the original dispatch information relating to the AP; namely, that he had fled from the Canadian border without completing a secondary inspection and that he had charges pending regarding theft of a firearm and assault of a peace officer. He was aware that WO1 had attempted a traffic stop but that the AP had fled. WO1 had described the AP as an officer safety concern and that a high-risk takedown would likely be required.

The SO noted that the AP's behaviours were escalating throughout the event irrespective of police presence and whether officers were closely engaged or not. His behaviour was consistent with someone who was motivated to escape. The SO believed that the AP represented a clear risk of grievous bodily harm or death to both the public and police. The SO explained his risk assessment by pointing to the following considerations. The AP drove at excessive speeds on unsafe roadways during inclement weather, including driving on the wrong side of the highway into oncoming traffic. He did so while being pursued by police vehicles with their emergency equipment activated. He actively evaded several de-escalation intervention techniques, including covert TDD deployments and a tactical vehicle intervention technique. He also attempted to return to the border and continued to present a firearm in full view of police.

The SO considered the possibility that the AP was holding the gun to his head to either try to get police to back off or possibly to commit suicide. The SO did not believe the AP was suicidal as the AP had slowed

down and taken steps to avoid collisions with civilian traffic, including a semi-truck. The SO believed that the AP intended to engage in some kind of interaction with police and that he seemed to be “desperate.”

After the AP’s vehicle went into the ditch and he fled on foot towards two nearby residences, the SO said he had “never been more scared in his entire career.” The SO armed himself with his shotgun and began pursuing the AP on foot. The SO immediately began yelling commands to, “get on the ground,” and telling him that he was under arrest. The AP did not comply with the commands and continued running “in a serpentine-like pattern” towards a residence. The AP repeatedly turned back towards officers, while still holding his gun in a “high port position”, which he described as a position that allowed for a quick transition to aim before firing. On one such occasion, as the AP turned towards officers, the SO fired a single round from his shotgun. He was unsure if it had any effect as the AP’s behaviour did not change and he simply continued running toward the residence.

The SO advised that at the time he fired his shotgun, he feared that the AP was ready to “challenge and take on the police,” and that he was going to shoot at him or other officers nearby. He was particularly concerned that WO3 was slightly ahead of him and handling his PSD, which the SO believed placed WO3 at a tactical disadvantage and in need of cover. He also feared that the AP may enter the residence to try to evade apprehension or to engage in an armed and barricaded situation. He was concerned about what the AP might do if he managed to enter a residence as his behaviour was so erratic; therefore, allowing the AP to continue uninhibited towards the residence was not acceptable to him from a public safety perspective.

Witness Officers

ASIRT investigators interviewed nine police officers. Six of these officers had more peripheral involvement in the pursuit.

WO2, WO3 and WO4 accompanied the SO in the foot pursuit of the AP after he abandoned his vehicle in the ditch. WO3 expressed that he shared the SO’s concerns for the safety of the residents in the nearby homes given that the AP was armed with a firearm and behaving strangely. WO3 explained that he could not deploy his PSD earlier in the foot pursuit as the PSD was overwhelmed by the commotion and could not lock onto the AP as his target. He heard the SO discharge his firearm when the AP was at the corner of the closest residence and observed that the firing of the single shot did not change the AP’s actions or behaviour.

WO2 and WO3 noted that they had engaged the AP in a brief conversation after he had jumped over the barbed-wire fence and run into a field. The AP was making comments about being tortured in the United States and saying that he wouldn’t go back. They tried to reassure him that he was safe, as he was in Canada, and instructed him to put his weapon down. The AP turned his back towards police. WO2 aimed his carbine at the AP as he believed he may turn around and shoot at police. While the AP’s back was turned, WO3 deployed his PSD to try to engage, distract, and safely apprehend him. The AP then turned back towards the officers. WO2 was about to discharge his carbine as he feared that the AP may shoot at them; however, he saw WO3’s PSD make contact with the AP. Almost simultaneously, the AP discharged his firearm against his own head and fell backwards.

Video Evidence

ASIRT investigators reviewed all available video of the incident. The WatchGuard cameras from 15 RCMP and Alberta Sheriff vehicles were reviewed and the most pertinent available images from those videos have been included above.

None of the WatchGuard cameras captured the final interaction between police and the AP. The field of view

of the cameras also did not allow for a singular image capturing both the AP and the SO in the same frame at the time the SO fired his shotgun. A review of multiple videos from various angles at the time that the SO was observed firing his shotgun was able to confirm that the AP was close to the residence, which was consistent with what was described by both the SO and WO3.

Analysis

ASIRT investigates where serious injury or death is caused by a police officer, in addition to other sensitive investigations of police officers. These are criminal investigations only.

Here, the action under investigation is the shot fired by the SO. There is no evidence that the gunshot fired by the SO struck the AP. Therefore, the shot fired by the SO did not cause the AP serious injury or contribute to his death. That factor alone is not determinative.

Irrespective of whether or not bodily harm ensued, an officer may face criminal liability where they intentionally discharge a firearm at a person with the specific intent to wound, maim, disfigure, or endanger the life of that person, or where they intentionally discharge a firearm at a person and are reckless as to the life or safety of that person. Potential offences include discharging a firearm with intent and reckless discharge of a firearm.

Section 25 Generally

Under s. 25 of the *Criminal Code*, police officers are permitted to use as much force as is necessary for the execution of their duties. Where the force used by an officer is intended or is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm, s. 25(3) applies and the officer must believe on reasonable grounds that the force is necessary for the self-preservation of the officer or preservation of anyone under that officer's protection. The force used here – discharging a firearm at a person – was clearly intended or likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm. The subject officer therefore must have believed on reasonable grounds that the force he used was necessary for his self-preservation or the preservation of another person under his protection. Another person can include other police officers.

For the defence provided by s. 25 to apply to the actions of an officer, the officer must be required or authorized by law to perform the action in the administration or enforcement of the law, must have acted on reasonable grounds in performing the action, and must not have used unnecessary force.

All uses of force by police must also be proportionate, necessary, and reasonable.

Proportionality requires balancing a use of force with the action to which it responds. As noted above, where force is intended or is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm, s. 25(3) codifies a requirement that the officer must believe on reasonable grounds that the force is necessary for the self-preservation of the officer or preservation of anyone under that officer's protection.

Necessity requires that there are not reasonable alternatives to the use of force that would also accomplish the same goal. These alternatives can include no action at all. Analysis of police actions must recognize the dynamic situations in which officers often find themselves, and such analysis should not expect police officers to weigh alternatives in real time in the same way they can later be scrutinized in a stress-free environment.

Reasonableness looks at the use of force and the situation as a whole from an objective viewpoint. Police actions are not to be judged on a standard of perfection, but on a standard of reasonableness.

Section 25 Applied

The SO was lawfully placed and acting in the execution of his duties in responding to a call for service relating to the AP. The initial information provided was that the AP had illegally entered Canada at the Coutts border crossing when he failed to stop for a secondary screening as directed by a CBSA officer. Additional information was provided about pending criminal charges the AP was facing in the United States, which related to the theft of a firearm and assault on a peace officer, thus raising the possibility of the presence of a firearm in the vehicle. A traffic stop was initiated by WO1 and the AP fled at high speed. This information gave all responding officers' grounds to arrest the AP. Under their core duty to protect the public, the officers were additionally required or authorized by law to apprehend the AP. They were acting on this duty throughout the incident.

The AP was pursued by police for approximately 90 minutes, both in his vehicle and on foot. Police were readily identifiable from their uniforms and were either operating marked police vehicles or unmarked police vehicles with their emergency lights and sirens activated at various times throughout the pursuit. The AP disregarded police directions to exit the vehicle during an initial traffic stop, and his conduct escalated immediately thereafter.

The AP engaged police in a high-speed chase on a highway where civilian traffic, albeit minimal due to the unsafe winter road conditions, was present. He continued travelling at high speeds even when the police vehicles fell back and created some distance. He actively avoided covert TDD deployments, and a tactical vehicle intervention technique aimed at de-escalating the high-risk driving pattern and safely bringing the AP into custody. For approximately the last 15 minutes of the pursuit, the AP was driving the wrong way on the highway and narrowly avoided collisions with two other vehicles. He did not avail himself of opportunities to cross over into the northbound lanes and persisted in driving into oncoming traffic.

Once a successful TDD deployment forced the AP to stop, he abandoned his vehicle and continued to flee on foot. He continued to disregard police directions to, "get on the ground," and ran towards nearby occupied residences. Throughout the pursuit, both in the vehicle and on foot, the AP was also observed holding a gun to his own head. There was no indication that the AP intended to surrender or comply with direction.

The AP's dangerous driving pattern combined with his persistent efforts to evade police after illegally entering Canada already supported legitimate officer safety and public safety concerns. Those concerns only increased after the police were able to disable his only mode of transportation and the AP persisted in his efforts to flee and began approaching civilian residences while still armed with a gun.

The SO responded reasonably by firing at the AP. A pointed firearm presents an immediate risk to the preservation of life. The fact that officers had only observed the AP pointing the gun at his own head, and not directly at police, does not mollify the officer's perceived risk of grievous bodily harm or death, especially in light of the AP's demonstrated erratic behaviour. There is no requirement in law that an officer wait to see if the person will shoot before acting. The SO's perception that the way the AP was holding the gun would have allowed for a quick transition to aim it at officers, that he appeared desperate as he fled on foot, and that he continued turning towards the officers as he ran towards the nearby residences provided an objectively reasonable basis for his concerns about the safety of himself, fellow officers, and civilians in nearby homes.

It was necessary for the SO to fire at the AP when he did. The AP had refused to comply with police directions. He had managed to create considerable distance from the officers and was nearing the occupied civilian residences while armed with a gun. Under the circumstances as then faced by the SO, no other use of force options were reasonably available to him.

The SO's use of his firearm to shoot at the AP was also proportionate to the threat of death or grievous bodily harm that he reasonably appeared to pose to the SO and other officers and civilians in the immediate area.

The SO was required or authorized by law to act that day and acted on reasonable grounds. His use of force was reasonable, proportionate, and necessary. As a result, the defence provided by s. 25 of the *Criminal Code* is likely to apply to the SO.

Conclusion

The SO's use of force was proportionate, necessary, and reasonable. As a result, there are no reasonable grounds to believe that an offence was committed.

Original signed

Matthew Block
Acting Executive Director

April 15, 2026

Date of Release