

Gordon P. McLaughlin
District Attorney



201 LaPorte Avenue, Suite 200
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521-2763
Phone: (970) 498-7200
Fax: (970) 498-7250

January 6, 2026

RE: November 16, 2025, Critical Incident Response Team investigation of the officer involved shooting on County Road 15, incident numbers FCPD FC25-017621, LCSO SO25-11640, LPD LP25-8959, CSUPD CS25-1643.

Sheriff John Feyen,

Pursuant to the 8th Judicial District Critical Incident Protocol, the District Attorney's Office reviewed the November 16, 2025, incident in which a law enforcement officer (specifically, Larimer County Sheriff's Deputy Chris Connor) fired his handgun at a citizen, which occurred on Larimer County Road 14, east of Interstate 25. This review is not required by §16-2.5-301, which only governs officer involved shootings that result in injury or death, but complies with the agreed upon CIRT protocol to review whether any law enforcement officer involved in a significant use of force violated any Colorado criminal statutes.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Applying the law to the facts of this incident, as described in greater detail below, I conclude Deputy Connor was legally justified in his use of physical force to protect his life, and to affect the arrest of Matthew Wright on November 16, 2025. Having concluded that the peace officer was justified in his use of physical force, no criminal charges can or will be filed against him by the District Attorney.

II. THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING INVESTIGATIONS AND REVIEW

C.R.S. § 16-2.5-301 governs investigations into peace officer-involved actions leading to injury or death. It provides, in relevant part:

Each police department, sheriff's office, and district attorney within the state shall develop protocols for participating in a multi-agency team, which shall include at least one other police department or sheriff's office, or the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, in conducting any investigation, evaluation, and review of an incident involving the discharge of a firearm by a peace officer that resulted in injury or death, or other use of force by a peace officer that resulted in death. The law enforcement agencies participating need not be from the same judicial district.

While this specific incident, which did not cause injury or death to any persons, is not subject to this statute, it is a "critical incident" as defined by 8th JD Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) Protocol and was therefore governed by the same rigorous procedures and was conducted by a

multi-agency team consisting of personnel from agencies within the jurisdiction who are members of the district's CIRT. Fort Collins Police Services was the lead agency, and it was assisted by other agencies, including Loveland Police Department, the 8th Judicial District Attorney's Office, Colorado State University Police Department, and the Larimer County Sheriff's Office.

C.R.S. § 20-1-114 provides:

The district attorney shall, if no criminal charges are filed following the completion of an investigation pursuant to section 16-2.5-301, C.R.S., release a report and publicly disclose the report explaining the district attorney's findings, including the basis for the decision not to charge the officer with any criminal conduct. The district attorney shall post the written report on its website or, if it does not have a website, make it publicly available upon request.

As Michael Wright has been criminally charged for his conduct*, the District Attorney must abide by Colorado's ethical and procedural rules to protect the Constitutional rights of the defendant and the integrity of the criminal case. Specifically, Rule 3.8. (Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor) provides in relevant part:

The prosecutor in a criminal case shall:

(f) except for statements that are necessary to inform the public of the nature and extent of the prosecutor's action and that serve a legitimate law enforcement purpose, refrain from making extrajudicial comments that have a substantial likelihood of heightening public condemnation of the accused unless such comments are permitted under Rule 3.6(b) or 3.6(c) and exercise reasonable care to prevent investigators, law enforcement personnel, employees or other persons assisting or associated with the prosecutor in a criminal case from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under Rule 3.6 or this Rule.

Therefore, the details in this report will be curtailed to comply with the letter and spirit of the ethical rules and to protect the integrity of the ongoing case, while providing sufficient information to satisfy the intent of C.R.S. § 16-2.5-301, § 20-1-114, the 8th JD CIRT Protocol, and the community's right to understand the actions of law enforcement in critical incidents.

**All charges against Michael Wright are merely allegations and he is presumed innocent of all charges filed against him unless and until he is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.*

III. JURISDICTION

As outlined in the facts below, the initial attempted stop of Mr. Wright's vehicle, the duration of the pursuit of Mr. Wright, and some of the crimes with which Mr. Wright is charged, occurred within Larimer County.

The road upon which the pursuit ended, Larimer County Road 14, is the southern border of Larimer County, separating Larimer County from Weld County. After the PIT maneuver, both the deputy's vehicle and Mr. Wright's vehicle ended up in the south shoulder of the road.

Given jurisdictional questions, the Weld County District Attorney's Office (19th Judicial District) was advised of the incident and the 8th JD CIRT activation. Since the nexus of the case, as well as the involved agency, were Larimer County-based, it was decided the 8th JD CIRT would continue to investigate and would share results with Weld County prior to a legal conclusion being issued.

The Weld County District Attorney has been provided with the full scope of reports and materials as reviewed by the 8th JD District Attorney. The Weld County District Attorney is in agreement with the final conclusion herein - namely, that Deputy Connor was legally justified in his actions and no charges can or should be filed against him.

IV. MATERIALS REVIEWED

I have been provided with materials produced during the CIRT investigation to review in making these conclusions. The information I have considered in this review includes:

- Relevant body-worn camera footage of the involved officer
- Radio traffic during the pursuit
- Reports/summaries of the CIRT investigators
- Recorded interviews of involved and witness officers
- Recorded and summarized interviews of lay witnesses
- Photographic and video evidence, including comprehensive scene documentation
- Physical evidence and analysis (e.g., measurements and accident reconstruction documentation)
- Background evidence

V. APPLICABLE LAW

Colorado's relevant use of force statutes and legal definitions:

§18-1-901 (3)(d), C.R.S. "Deadly physical force" means force, the intended, natural, and probable consequence of which is to produce death, and which does, in fact, produce death.

§18-1-707, C.R.S. (Use of force by peace officers—definitions), 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 injury to the peace officer or another person.
- (2) When physical force is used, a peace officer shall:
 - (a) Not use deadly force to apprehend a person who is suspected of only a minor or nonviolent offense;

- (b) Use only a degree of force consistent with the minimization of injury to others;
- (c) Ensure that assistance and medical aid are rendered to any injured or affected persons as soon as practicable; and
- (d) Ensure that any identified relatives or next of kin of persons who have sustained serious bodily injury or death are notified as soon as practicable.

(4) A peace officer shall identify himself or herself as a peace officer and give a clear verbal warning of his or her intent to use firearms or other deadly physical force, with sufficient time for the warning to be observed, unless to do so would unduly place peace officers at risk of injury or would create a risk of death or injury to other persons.

§18-1-704, C.R.S., Colorado's general self-defense statute states in relevant part:

- (1) [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 or imminent 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.

Under Colorado law, a person acts legally to defend themselves or others when both a "reasonable belief and actual belief" exist on behalf of the actor. *See Sanchez v. People*, 820 P.2d 1103, 1108 (Colo. 1991). The law requires the fact finder to "weigh all relevant circumstances to determine whether a person asserting the defense of self-defense has acted as a reasonable person would act in similar circumstances." *Id.*

VI. SUMMARY OF LEGAL STANDARD AS APPLIED TO THIS EVENT

As a threshold legal matter, the level of force used by Deputy Connor in this case was not "deadly force" as defined by Colorado law, as no death occurred. Colorado law necessitates both the intent to cause death and the result of death for a deadly force analysis. So, while Deputy Connor's actions carried the obvious risk of death, his actions must be reviewed under the general use of force as required by law.

When condensing the legal authority down to an applicable standard to apply to this event, and since deadly physical force was not used, we must determine:

- 1) Whether Deputy Connor attempted to utilize nonviolent means prior to resorting to use of force against Mr. Wright and whether nonviolent means would have been ineffective in effecting an arrest or preventing the escape of Mr. Wright or preventing an imminent threat of injury to Deputy Connor.
- 2) Whether Deputy Connor used only a degree of force consistent with the minimization of injury to others.
- 3) Whether Deputy Connor or his fellow officers ensured that assistance and medical aid were rendered to Mr. Wright as soon as it was practicable after the vehicle intervention.

- 4) Whether Deputy Connor identified himself as a police officer and gave warnings with sufficient time for the warnings to be observed.

VII. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT FACTS.

Because there has been a criminal case filed against Mr. Wright, the following summary will include various sources of information, at times without specific attribution to the person or other source of information. The facts herein are intentionally limited primarily to those which are – or may likely be - available in the public record and which have also been corroborated by the review of additional evidence gathered in the CIRT investigation. Additional facts, if any, are provided only as necessary to explain the findings.

All references to Mr. Wright's conduct remain merely allegations and he retains the presumption of innocence unless and until proven guilty.

On November 16, 2025, at approximately 2:32 AM, Larimer County Sheriff Deputy Chris Connor attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a black Audi sedan with no legal front license plate, in the area of Grand Market Avenue and TPC Parkway, in the Town of Berthoud, in Larimer County. The driver of the vehicle was later identified as Matthew Wright. There was also a second occupant in Mr. Wright's vehicle, seated in the front passenger seat.

Mr. Wright did not stop and instead eluded at a high rate of speed and a pursuit was initiated. Wright drove approximately 70 miles per hour through a residential zone. The vehicle then exited the neighborhood at 42nd street and ran a stop sign. The vehicle ran a red light at Berthoud Parkway and 42nd St, later ran a second stop sign, then ran a second red light at 42nd Street and Highway 287. Having entered county roads, the pursuit reached dangerous speeds, with both vehicles traveling around 120 miles per hour. The total distance of the pursuit was approximately 8.75 miles.

Deputy Connor performed a Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT) on the vehicle at County Road 14, east of Interstate 25. Mr. Wright's vehicle came to stop off the right side of the roadway on the shoulder with the front of the vehicle facing toward the north/northwest. Deputy Connor's vehicle was positioned perpendicular to and abutting Mr. Wright's vehicle.

Deputy Connor stepped out of his vehicle and drew his duty weapon, which is consistent with conducting a high-risk traffic stop. Deputy Connor was standing inside the doorframe between the door and the driver's side of his vehicle. Deputy Connor reported he believed Mr. Wright was attempting to drive away, which is corroborated by loud revving of the engine, clearly heard on Connor's body worn camera recording. At that time, the positioning of Mr. Wright's vehicle meant he would have driven directly at the door which was protecting Deputy Connor.

Deputy Connor reported he feared for his life and safety and that if he did not stop the vehicle he would be pinned between the door and his vehicle or run over by Wright's vehicle. Deputy Connor quickly fired his duty weapon one time while still exiting the vehicle, using a one-handed grip.

The round entered the front windshield of the Audi. The round did not strike anyone.



Image 1 – Deputy Connor's patrol vehicle (foreground) and Mr. Wright's black Audi (background). Vehicles remain in original positions on-scene, with Deputy Connor's door open as it would have been at the time of the shot.

Crime scene analysis showed that Mr. Wright's vehicle had not succeeded in moving forward once coming to a stop after the PIT. The investigation determined there was a possible transmission malfunction that existed before the pursuit, which could account for the audible engine revving without forward movement.

Trajectory analysis determined the path of the bullet fired from Deputy Connor's handgun. The bullet entered the front driver's side of the windshield and impacted the metal panel behind the rear foam panel on the right side of the rear passenger's side seat back. The bullet passed between the driver and front passenger's seated positions.

Analysis of the scene showed that the PIT maneuver was initiated within Larimer County on the paved roadway. The vehicles then traveled off the paved portion of the roadway onto the dirt shoulder on the southern edge of the roadway. The locations of Deputy Connor and Mr. Wright at the time of the shooting would have been directly on or about the jurisdictional boundary between Larimer and Weld County (which are part of two separate judicial districts, the 8th and the 19th, respectively). It was determined on the night of the incident that the 19th Judicial District Attorney

would be notified and included in the final analysis to avoid any jurisdictional confusion or future legal issues.

Other deputies arrived on scene and Mr. Wright was placed in custody. Mr. Wright was checked on scene by law enforcement and then by medical personnel for injuries and was subsequently transported to the Medical Center of the Rockies for further evaluation. Mr. Wright may have suffered minor abrasions from the PIT but was not impacted by the bullet or any fragments. He was released the same evening from the hospital. Deputy Connor expressed discomfort in his eye after the incident. He was evaluated by medical personnel at Poudre Valley Hospital and cleared without notable injury.

Deputy Connor cooperated with an interview by the CIRT investigators on the night of the incident and completed a follow up interview later to provide additional details requested by the CIRT. Deputy Connor explained the incident started shortly after 2:00 AM when he drove through the Maverik Gas Station on Grand Market Avenue and spotted the suspect vehicle and observed the German style front license plate which was not a legal Colorado plate. Deputy Connor initiated a traffic stop and turned on his overhead lights. The vehicle started to accelerate and elude northbound. He advised dispatch he was in pursuit and activated his emergency siren.

Deputy Connor detailed the route that Wright took and indicated they reached speeds of approximately “120 to 130 miles an hour”. Once the vehicle slowed, he conducted a PIT maneuver. After the PIT maneuver was completed, the vehicle spun, facing into the northwest of the roadway. Deputy Connor could hear the vehicle attempting to drive out so he continued to push the car a bit further off the roadway to disable it.

Deputy Connor explained, “after I felt that the vehicle was disabled, I went to get out of my patrol car to transition to a high risk stop. As I was getting out of my car with my driver’s door open, I felt my vehicle move back and my driver door slightly push into me. I drew my firearm and fired one round into the windshield of the vehicle because I was scared that if I didn’t act right then, or then and there, he was gaining traction and he would’ve pinned me in between my door and my patrol car or ran me over and seriously hurt me or killed me.”

He later detailed, “I drew my duty weapon out and I shot towards the driver where he would’ve been seated in the vehicle.” He articulated that the incident happened so quickly he did not have time to give any commands and he shot one-handed due to the urgency of the situation. He later noted the female passenger had her hands visible and up, but the driver was still trying to drive out of the PIT maneuver until he fired. He then saw the driver’s hands up and did not fire his weapon again.

Deputy Connor was asked to talk about what happened after firing and explained, “after I had fired the shot, it had finally become super apparent to me that I had almost gotten run over by this car and that I had just fired my weapon on duty. And I exclaimed, ‘oh shit,’ just out of a reaction. I was scared at that moment. And luckily, I knew that I had other deputies and officers in route to me.”

At his second interview, Deputy Connor was asked for further explanation about the intentionality

of his decision given how quickly the situation unfolded. Deputy Connor stated that he got out of his vehicle because the angle of the vehicles facing each other would have provided the driver with a clear view through his windshield to fire if they were armed and therefore conducting a high risk stop, outside his vehicle, was believed to be a safer option. He stated that he raised his arm over the door and angled his firearm downward to try to avoid injuring the passenger. He stated the “urgency of the situation” is what caused him to shoot one-handed and that taking the time to place his second hand on the firearm could have led to him being run over. He further explained he stated “oh shit” afterwards due to stress from the situation.

Investigators also interviewed the passenger in Mr. Wright’s vehicle. The passenger has not been charged with any crimes and therefore their name is being withheld for purposes of this review. The passenger confirmed they and Mr. Wright both observed the police vehicle behind them with active lights and sirens. They confirmed Mr. Wright was driving erratically, which caused them to be fearful during the pursuit. They also confirmed Mr. Wright was trying to shift gears in order to drive out of the PIT maneuver and continue to elude arrest.

CRIMINAL CHARGES

Matthew Wright is currently charged with the following offenses:

1. **Attempted Assault in the 3rd Degree** (C.R.S. 18-3-204, Class 2 Misdemeanor),
2. **Vehicular Eluding** (C.R.S. 18-9-116.5, Class 5 Felony),
3. **Reckless Driving** (C.R.S. 42-4-1401, Class 2 Misdemeanor),
4. **Driving Under Suspension** (C.R.S. 42-2-138(1)(a), Traffic Infraction),
5. **Speeding 40mph or Over** (C.R.S. 42-4-1101(1), Class 2 Traffic Misdemeanor), and
6. **Unlawful Plates** (C.R.S. 42-3-202(1)(a), Class B Traffic Infraction).

These charges are merely allegations, and Mr. Wright is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

VIII. CONCLUSION.

The District Attorney’s Office makes the following findings regarding the relevant questions posed by this CIRT investigation:

- 1) Whether Deputy Connor attempted to utilize nonviolent means prior to resorting to use of force against Mr. Wright and whether nonviolent means would have been ineffective in preventing an arrest or preventing the escape of Mr. Wright.

Deputy Connor pursued Mr. Wright for almost nine miles, attempting to get Mr. Wright to stop. During that time, he observed Mr. Wright commit numerous traffic infractions and drive

dangerously. Deputy Connor had his lights and sirens activated and provided Mr. Wright with ample opportunity to pull over and end the pursuit. Given the circumstances, if Deputy Connor chose to continue to pursue the vehicle and decided that effecting an arrest immediately were warranted – both of which were within his agency’s policy to do for the observed offenses – vehicle immobilization and a high-risk stop was one of the few options he would have had available. Except for terminating the pursuit, in order to effect arrest at a later and potentially safer time, the immobilization tactic used by Deputy Connor was the most limited tool available.

- 2) Whether Deputy Connor used only a degree of force consistent with the minimization of injury to others.

Once out of his vehicle, Deputy Connor was exposed and vulnerable. While his front bumper or tire was pressed against the side of Mr. Wright’s vehicle, it was not clear at that time Mr. Wright’s vehicle was completely immobilized. Deputy Connor’s vehicle door would have provided minimal protection from an advancing vehicle and could well have served to pin Deputy Connor against the body of the vehicle. While the investigation revealed that Mr. Wright’s vehicle did not in fact move toward Deputy Connor, audio evidence from the body-worn camera and statements from the passenger confirmed Deputy Connor’s account that the engine was revving as Mr. Wright attempted to accelerate and advance the vehicle that was pointed in the direction of Deputy Connor.

Having decided to pursue, PIT, and exit his vehicle, Deputy Connor had no alternative or less-lethal means to prevent the vehicle from advancing accept by using his firearm. No other tool could disable a vehicle or deter Mr. Wright who was still inside his vehicle.

- 3) Whether Deputy Connor or his fellow officers ensured that assistance and medical aid were rendered as soon as was practicable after the vehicle intervention.

Upon arrival of backup officers, aid was provided expeditiously to Mr. Wright by law enforcement and then medical personnel. Mr. Wright did not sustain significant injuries, and none resulted from the shooting. The passenger in the Audi sustained no injuries.

- 4) Whether Deputy Connor identified himself as a police officer and gave warnings with sufficient time for the warnings to be observed.

Deputy Connor was clearly identified as a police officer by his lights and sirens during the pursuit, as well as his marked patrol car and marked uniform during the stop. The gravity of the situation would be obvious to the occupants of the Audi given the pursuit and PIT. Deputy Connor stated that he did not have sufficient time to issue a verbal warning prior to firing because of his positioning and belief that the car was imminently advancing. Had the Audi engaged in gear and accelerated forward, which could have occurred at any instant, the danger of significant injury to Deputy Connor would have been imminent. Thus, the totality of the situation exempts him from issuing a verbal warning given the risk of injury.

The totality of the evidence presented through the CIRT investigation reveals Connor was legally justified in his use of force on November 16, 2025, as an act of self-defense. As a result, the District Attorney's Office concludes that no charges can or will be brought against the deputy.

The scope of a CIRT review is solely to form legal conclusions regarding uses of force and determine if they conform with Colorado law. It is beyond the authority of the CIRT to review the propriety of an agency policy, such as whether, where, and why to pursue vehicles and when to terminate such pursuits. Internal agency policies, such as pursuit policies, are at the sole discretion of the relevant agency and the District Attorney has no legal authority to dictate policy changes.

The District Attorney's Office would like to thank the members of the Eight Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team for their work on this investigation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon McLaughlin". To the right of the signature, the date "1.6.25" is handwritten in a smaller, more formal style.

Gordon McLaughlin
District Attorney
8th Judicial District