



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

GEORGE BRAUCHLER, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

23RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

SERVING DOUGLAS, ELBERT AND LINCOLN COUNTIES

August 4, 2026

Sheriff Darren M. Weekly
4000 Justice Way
Castle Rock, CO 80109

Re: CIRT 26-01, Death of Mr. John Gorham

Dear Sheriff Weekly,

The Twenty-Third Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team (herein after “CIRT” Team) has completed its investigation into the May 17, 2026, events involving the death of Mr. John Gorham. Mr. Gorham died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Douglas County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Jaden Brown fired his duty weapon shortly before Mr. Gorham’s death. These events occurred at 3421 Weasel Way in Franktown, Colorado.

SUMMARY

The Twenty-Third CIRT Team presented the investigation to the District Attorney’s Office and other CIRT members on August 4, 2026. Applying the law to the facts of this incident, as described in more detail below, and after a thorough review and analysis of the evidence, I find that Deputy Brown’s use of physical force was reasonable, necessary, and appropriate to defend himself and others from the perceived threat posed by Mr. Gorham. Given this conclusion, no criminal charges will be filed against Deputy Brown. This letter is being issued pursuant to C.R.S. 20-1-114(1).

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

C.R.S. § 16-2.5-301 governs investigations into police officer-involved shootings. This statute 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. The law enforcement agencies participating need not be from the same judicial district.” C.R.S. § 16-2.5 301(1).

The investigation into this shooting incident was conducted by multi-agency team consisting of personnel from the Parker Police Department, Castle Rock Police Department, 23rd Judicial District Attorney’s Office, and Littleton Police Department. The lead investigators were Detectives Bev Wilson and Leslie Mattern with the Parker Police Department.

C.R.S. § 20-1-114 provides, in relevant part: “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.” C.R.S. § 20-1-114(1).

This document constitutes a report of the findings of the District Attorney for the 23rd Judicial District and includes the basis of the decision not to charge the involved officers with any criminal conduct.

MATERIALS REVIEWED AND INFORMATION CONSIDERED

I reviewed all materials provided by the lead investigators and members of the CIRT, including body-worn camera video, dispatch notes, radio traffic, forensic analysis, the autopsy report, reports of investigating officers and crime scene technicians, the interviews of the involved officers, all reports and recorded interviews of witnesses, and photographs and video of the scene.

SUMMARY OF FACTS RELATED TO THE DEATH OF MR. GORHAM

On May 17, 2026, deputies from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office responded to 3241 Weasel Way in Franktown, unincorporated Douglas County, Colorado, on a report of a physical family fight, wherein an adult male was reported to be assaulting his elderly mother. The call came in at approximately 12:52pm. Dispatch relayed to the responding deputies that a juvenile female, Ve.G., stated that her father (John Gorham) was trying to kill grandma (K.G.) Ve.G. was not able to provide her address, but dispatch was able to determine the incident was occurring at 3241 Weasel Way. Ve.G. told dispatch, which dispatch then relayed to responding deputies, that Ve.G.'s sister, Vi.G., had stopped Mr. Gorham from hitting K.G. with a chair in K.G.'s bedroom and that Mr. Gorham was upset with K.G. for not trying hard enough to help him get a job. The “Call for Service Detail Report” (“CAD”) indicated the use of drugs or alcohol was not reported and that “no other weapons [were] in the home.” Ve.G. called 911 from a corded landline phone in the kitchen of the residence, and at 1:00pm per the CAD, she told dispatch that Vi.G. was still in the bedroom upstairs with Mr. Gorham and K.G., and that Mr. Gorham was still screaming, although she was unsure if Mr. Gorham was actively assaulting anyone.

At approximately 12:55pm, Douglas County Sheriff Deputies T. Bozarth, L. Catterton, and J. Brown were all assigned to respond to Weasel Way. All responded emergent with their overhead lights and sirens activated. During Deputy Brown's voluntary interview with the CIRT lead investigators, Deputy Brown recalled that the call for service was “toned out,” and a “child caller” reported that her dad (Mr. Gorham) had assaulted her grandmother (K.G.). Deputy Brown recalled learning prior to arrival that Mr. Gorham was holding a chair and was attempting to assault K.G. with it in a second story bedroom, and that DCSO's Community Response Team (CRT) believed Mr. Gorham to be blind.

The CAD notes that Deputy Brown arrived on scene at 1:03pm. He and Deputy Bozarth arrived around the same time, and Deputy Catterton arrived very shortly after them. Deputies Brown and Bozarth parked along the side of the roadway on Weasel Way near the home and approached the front of the residence by walking up the long driveway. Deputy Brown initially walked towards the left front (northeast) corner of the house while Deputy Bozarth approached and knocked on the front entry doors. There was no response to Deputy Bozarth's first series of knocks. She noted that the door was thick and the knocking did not appear to make much noise, so she used her foot to kick the bottom of the door to knock the second time while loudly announcing, "Sheriff's Office."

Several seconds later, the right front door (from the point of view of the deputies) opened inward and a juvenile female (later identified as Vi.G.) ran outside. She was barefoot and wearing a long blue shirt. She did not say anything as she ran from the home. Vi.G. ran towards the attached garage on the northwest corner (on the right side of the home, if looking at the home from the front yard) and Deputy Bozarth turned to go after her.



At that time, Deputy Brown moved toward the now half-open front door and was joined there by Deputy Catterton. Deputy Brown was on the left side of the door (if looking at the front door from the front yard) and Deputy Catterton was on the right side of the door. The right (west) side of the double door remained mostly open, allowing for deputies to see inside the residence. Deputy Brown announced "Sheriff's Office" while peering into the rear of the residence. From Deputy Brown's body-worn camera, he could see into the kitchen of the residence, where another juvenile female (Ve.G.) was holding the corded landline phone. Deputies Brown and Catterton told the juvenile female it was okay to come out, and Deputy Brown gestured with his hand to come out.



As the deputies were trying to get Ve.G. to come outside, another female voice was heard shouting, “Don’t come in, he has a gun.” At the same time, a distinct sound could be heard - Deputy Brown described the sound as “the sound of a gun racking or making it charged and loaded,” and that he believed the racking sound “from higher above us.” Deputy Catterton later reported that she heard rustling at the top of the stairs and heard a “metallic sound,” which she could not better describe, but the noise made her think that someone may have had a gun or other weapon of some sort.

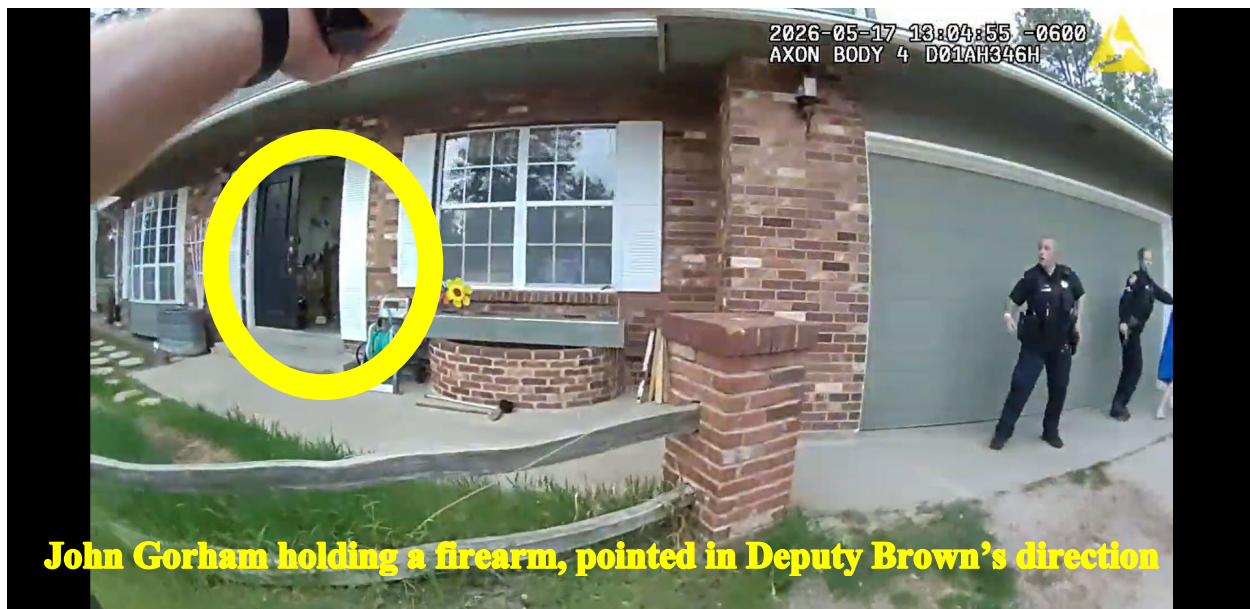
In his later voluntary interview, Deputy Brown stated he believed there were potentially still two people inside the house, and he heard, “an adult female from inside the house say...something along the lines of, ‘He has a gun.’” Deputy Brown said it sounded as though the older female was upstairs when this was said.



Deputy Brown retreated from the front door and aired to dispatch that “he [a male inside the home] has a weapon.” Deputy Brown was in the front yard of the residence, still on the left side of the door, while Deputy Catterton retreated towards the driveway which was on the right side of the residence.



Deputy Brown crossed the front yard to join the other deputies, which required him to cross the plane of the open front door. As Deputy Brown crossed to the right side of the front door and residence, he lifted up his service weapon. At that point, Mr. Gorham was seen inside the residence just inside the front door, and he was holding a gun that was pointed in Deputy Brown's direction.





In his later voluntary interview, Deputy Brown said that due to the lack of sufficient cover behind the left side of the double front door, he decided to move towards the garage, as it offered “more cover with brick wall and sidings of the house and better concealment.” He continued, “As I passed from left to right, I looked first down – the first thing I saw down the hallway into, what looked like, to a kitchen on the right side of the door. And then as I passed right – continued moving right – I saw an adult male with a black handgun with a – it was a dark colored slide and a lighter colored barrel that I could see through the ejection port. I saw the slide originally, and then I saw the barrel pointed in my direction, which is when I, uh, fired at him.” Deputy Brown said the male was on the lower steps of the stairwell, coming towards him. He stated, in part, “...[the male’s] weight and inertia was forward.” Deputy Brown said the male (Mr. Gorham) was standing in front of a solid, white wall that had a corner which he believed may have led to another room or closet. Mr. Gorham was silhouetted or “shaded” against the white wall and “brightly lit by the exterior light.”

When Deputy Brown fired his weapon, he believed “the barrel [of the male’s] was pointed at me because my entire thought process was moving faster than the slide I was looking at, expecting it to discharge a round.” Deputy Brown said, “So when I saw the white wall and the gun, I knew that that provided a better backdrop than potentially standing straight and, uh, shooting down the hallway where I wasn’t sure what was there. Um, so by moving right, I got – I got a backdrop behind him that was more of a wall that allowed me to attempt to safely fire and defend both myself and third parties on scene.” Deputy Brown stated he aimed at the male’s “center mass – his grey t-shirt.” When asked why he fired his weapon at the male, Deputy Brown said, “The gun was pointed at me and I feared he was going to use it on me or the juvenile who

had just run out of the house, or one of my partners.” Deputy Brown did not believe he had any other choice but to fire his weapon at Mr. Gorham – “...As I was moving with the male’s weapon already pointed at me, I [did not] believe there was time for any other options.”

Deputy Brown fired his service weapon four times. Deputy Brown said he was “hyper focused” on the weapon pointed at him. He lost his sight picture of Mr. Gorham while moving right towards better cover, and that is why he stopped firing. Deputy Bozarth recalled hearing the front door slam closed about three to four minutes after the gunfire ended. Crime scene personnel who entered the residence later noted that the front door’s deadbolt had been engaged.

After Deputy Brown fired his service weapon, Deputy Catterton aired to dispatch that shots were fired. The three deputies and the juvenile female took cover on the right side of the residence, where Ve.G. and K.G. joined them after exiting through other doors of the house, until they were all safely extricated by members of the regional SWAT team.

No additional rounds were fired by members of the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office. None of the deputies reported hearing any gunshots from inside the residence after Deputy Brown fired his weapon.

When asked if it was possible to render aid to the male, Deputy Brown explained, “I [had] no idea the condition of the suspect, his weapon, or his intentions. I don’t, I don’t believe we could safely [have] done that for either myself, giving the aid, or any of the parties on scene that we were there for.”

In the recording of the 911 call made by Ve.G., she immediately told the call taker, “...dad was trying to kill my grandma.” She explained the altercation happening between Mr. Gorham and K.G. and provided information about the individuals inside the home, including that at one point Mr. Gorham was still yelling. At eleven minutes and twenty (11:20) into the 911 recording, a series of “bangs” or “knocks” can be heard in the background. The call taker asked Ve.G. if Mr. Gorham is getting nearer to her, and Ve.G. whispered, “he’s coming downstairs” and said she needed to be quiet. The call taker told Ve.G. that it was okay to be quiet and to push a button if something was wrong. Several seconds later, a voice (one of the female deputies) can be heard asking, “Are you still on the phone? You’re okay, hon, come on out.” Immediately, another female voice can be heard saying, “Don’t come in... he’s got a gun, he has a gun.” Ve.G. then told dispatch, “He’s got a gun. He’s got a gun.” The audio in the background becomes inaudible as the call taker asked Ve.G. who has a gun, and a series of four gunshots is heard in the background, followed by a woman’s screams. Ve.G. immediately believed that Mr. Gorham had shot K.G.. Ve.G. stays on the phone with 911. During this time Mr. Gorham was yelling and K.G. can be heard crying and screaming. At one point, Mr. Gorham said something like, “Why didn’t you help me get a job?” Mr. Gorham continued yelling for a few minutes. Eventually, Ve.G. set the telephone down and she exited the residence through a back door, but the line remained on. At approximately twenty-three minutes and twenty-two seconds (23:22) into the 911 recording, a single loud sound can be heard through the open line. No other sounds were detected after that.

Crime scene personnel later processed the scene and observed four spent cartridge casings in the driveway area in front of the garage door. The casings bore the “FC 9mm Luger” headstamp observed on the ammunition by Deputy Brown.

Mr. Gorham was found in a supine position at the bottom of the stairwell which led to the second story. Based on his position from drone footage and SWAT officers’ body worn camera, Mr. Gorham’s body slid down part of the staircase to its resting position. His head was closer to the top of the stairs. His knees were touching the entryway floor and were fully folded, which caused his feet to be positioned slightly behind him and alongside his torso and abdomen areas. The decedent’s right arm was resting on his thigh, and the pointer finger on his right hand was slightly hooked. Just beneath Mr. Gorham’s right hand was a black handgun, a generation 4 Glock model 17, loaded with 9mm Luger ammunition. Retrieving deputies noted that the “trigger of the Glock was fully depressed to the rear, and the slide was out of battery, exposing the front of the barrel from the slide by approximately half an inch.” The magazine inside the handgun had twelve (12) additional rounds loaded into it. Mr. Gorham had two additional Glock magazines in the pocket of his shorts. A spent cartridge was recovered from the base of the stairs in the residence.

The autopsy of John Gorham was completed by Dr. Leon Kelley with the Douglas County Coroner’s Office on May 18, 2026. Through the examination, it was determined that Mr. Gorham sustained a single intraoral gunshot, located in the upper right roof/palate of his mouth, which exited through the back of his head. Mr. Gorham had other injuries to his person, such as abrasions to his back and legs, which did not appear to have been sustained as a result of this shooting incident, as some were covered with bandages. Mr. Gorham’s cause of death was determined to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head and manner of death was ruled as a suicide.

APPLICABLE LAW

The ethical obligation of prosecutors and the policy of the District Attorney’s Office is to only prosecute a case when 1) there is a good faith basis to believe the individual to be prosecuted has committed the crime, and 2) there is a reasonable likelihood of conviction at trial. This is a higher standard than the probable cause standard used by police officers making arrest decisions. Criminal liability for charging is established when there is a good faith basis to believe the individual committed the crime, and there is sufficient evidence to prove all of the elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt, to include the criminal conduct and the criminal mental state. Additionally, the prosecution must disprove any statutorily recognized justification or defense beyond a reasonable doubt.

The District Attorney’s review of an officer-involved shooting event is guided by the statutes pertaining to the affirmative defenses applicable to use of force by peace officers, specifically C.R.S. § 18-1-707:

(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 serious bodily injury or death to the peace officer or another person.

(2) When physical force is used, a peace officer shall:

- (a) Not use deadly physical 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.

(3) A peace officer is justified in using deadly physical force to make an arrest only when all other means of apprehension are unreasonable given the circumstances and (a) The arrest is for a felony involving conduct including the use or threatened use of deadly physical force; (b) The suspect poses an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person; (c) The force employed does not create a substantial risk of injury to other persons.

(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.

(4.5) Notwithstanding any other provision in this section, a peace officer is justified in using deadly force if the peace officer has an objectively reasonable belief that a lesser degree of force is inadequate and the peace officer has objectively reasonable grounds to believe, and does believe, that he or another person is in imminent danger of being killed or of receiving serious bodily injury

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The question presented to the 23rd Judicial District Attorney's Office is whether Deputy Brown, when firing his weapon at John Gorham, reasonably believed the use of potentially deadly force was necessary to protect himself or others from what he believed to be the use of imminent deadly force by Mr. Gorham.

The actions of Deputy Brown, in firing his service weapon at Mr. Gorham, were reasonably justified. Prior to arrival at the Weasel Way house, Deputy Brown knew that Mr. Gorham was reportedly assaulting his mother and that a child called 911. When deputies arrived on scene, they knocked and announced, "Sheriff's Office." One of the juvenile females ran out of the house barefoot. When Deputy Brown and Deputy Catterton looked inside the now open front door, they observed another juvenile female in the kitchen on the phone, and they attempted to get her to come outside. As they did so, they heard an older female voice from upstairs yell, "don't come in, he has a gun." At the same time, Deputy Brown's body worn camera documents

the “racking” sound he heard coming from up above him. As Deputy Brown moved from the left side of the door to the right for better cover, he observed Mr. Gorham in the doorway, pointing a gun in his direction. Deputy Brown stated that because of what he saw, he was in fear for his own life and the lives of the other individuals on the property. Ultimately, the physical force deployed by Deputy Brown was non-fatal, as Mr. Gorham’s death was the result of a self-inflicted gunshot to the head. None of Deputy Brown’s bullets caused injury to Mr. Gorham.

I find that Deputy Brown reasonably believed that Mr. Gorham posed an imminent threat of deadly physical force to himself and others in the vicinity, and that lesser force was not possible given the timing of events. Deputy Brown heard that a man inside had a gun and moments later, he saw Mr. Gorham with a gun pointed in his direction, posing a threat to Deputy Brown, the other deputies on scene, and the juvenile female who was outside with deputies. Deputy Brown did not commit any crimes, and criminal charges will not be filed against him.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "abh", is enclosed within a light gray rectangular box.

Abby Hegarty
Senior Deputy District Attorney