



With Justice For All

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Georgia Officer Charged with Murder in Attempted Arrest of Subject

Our newest case involves support for Torrey Thompson, formerly of the DeKalb County (Georgia) Police Department. Officer Thompson has been charged with felony murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, and violation of an oath by an officer following the fatal shooting of Lorenzo Matthews, a 22-year-old black male.

A warrant had been issued on felony charges for Matthews, who had demonstrated a willingness to put others in harm's way to avoid arrest. He was a suspect under investigation for a shooting and robbery in the apartment complex

where the incident occurred, and he had recently assaulted a police officer.

At 3:00 a.m. on September 12, 2006, two DeKalb County police officers were dispatched to an apartment complex in Decatur to investigate a stolen vehicle that had been identified in a hit-and-run accident. When the police stopped the vehicle, the occupants jumped out and fled on foot. The victim of the hit-and-run advised police that Matthews was one of those in the car. Police were given permission to search an apartment where Matthews was believed to be hiding. The officers called for backup. Three police officers responded, including Officers Torrey Thompson and R. L. Knock.

While three of the officers went to the apartment to search it, Officers Thompson and Knock positioned themselves at the bottom of the stairwell at the back of the building in the event that the suspect tried to escape. The officers used their flashlights to illuminate the area in the absence of lighting.

When the other three officers entered the apartment, they encountered Darylon Slade, who complied with a frisk search, and Matthews, who immediately fled out the rear door and ran to the stairwell where Officers Knock and Thompson were waiting.

The officers yelled "STOP, GET TO THE GROUND" and ordered Matthews "SHOW YOUR HANDS." Matthews refused orders and ran down the staircase holding what Officer Knock believed to be a small-caliber pistol. Officer Knock yelled "SHOW YOUR HANDS! STOP! DROP YOUR WEAPON!" Matthews continued to ignore the orders; at the bottom of the stairs, Matthews lunged at Officer Knock while pointing the black object in his hand at him. Officer Knock fired at Matthews but he kept going, jumping over the railing and running toward Officer Thompson.

Since his fellow officer was in the line of fire, Officer

Torrey Thompson



Torrey Thompson, 31, was born and raised in Florence, Alabama. He has an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in administration. He worked in embassy security in Cyprus and Peru, the latter assignment during a terrorist attack in 2003. He was a Marine for six years and discharged at the rank of sergeant before becoming a police officer in DeKalb County. He received four commendations during his service in the Police Department and was never disciplined. His record was "impeccable,"

according to his attorney, William Atkins.

Officer Thompson voluntarily resigned from the force in November 2006 and took a job with the Barrow County Sheriff's Office, where he worked until indicted in July 2008.

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NEW CASE



Sgt. Torrey Thompson shakes hands with the U.S. Ambassador to Peru while stationed there when serving in the Marines.

Knock did not fire again but yelled to Officer Thompson, "SHOOT HIM." Officer Thompson hesitated until he saw the object in Matthews' right hand. He then fired twice at Matthews. Matthews kept running, scaling the yard fence and heading straight for a wooded area some 27 feet behind the apartment building.

Officer Thompson pursued Matthews, again ordering him to "STOP." Matthews turned to look at him, and the officer fired again. Matthews disappeared into the woods.

A K-9 unit was summoned to search the wooded area. They found a black cell phone case and a knife. Eventually, Matthews was found dead in the nearby shopping center.

During the investigation that followed, both officers stated that their actions were justifiable. They were threatened by a dangerous suspect wielding what they thought was a pistol and making aggressive moves toward them. The entire episode lasted less than two minutes, in the dark, with a confrontation between police and a wanted criminal. Both officers feared for their lives.

Two years after the incident, a special Grand Jury was convened to investigate 12 incidents in 2006 by the DeKalb County Police Department involving the shooting of suspects by the police. This episode was one that they decided to pursue. Torrey Thompson was indicted in July 2008 and faces a murder trial and possibly a life sentence in prison.

After analyzing this case, LELDF concluded the proper use of force as outlined in the Supreme Court case, *Graham v. Conner* (1989), was complied with. The Court said that force is justified when judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene. The "reasonableness" takes into consideration that law enforcement personnel are often forced to make split-second judgments in tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations. This occurrence was such a case.

We are providing assistance to Officer Thompson's defense team. We will update you in our next newsletter.



LELDF Board Member and former U.S. Attorney General, Ed Meese, shares a moment with Charlottesville (VA) Chief of Police Timothy Longo at the December 2008 "Suicide by Cop: Averting the Crisis" symposium. The three-day event was held at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Mr. Meese was one of the speakers at the symposium.

Consider LELDF in Your Planned Giving. You can help ensure that the work of the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund (LELDF) will continue by including us in your estate planning. By making a devise to LELDF, you will automatically become a member of our *In Defense of Justice Society*, and your name will be engraved on our Society membership plaque proudly displayed in our headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. To set this up, contact your attorney or LELDF Chairman, David H. Martin, at LELDF@cox.net.



founded 1994

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CASE UPDATES

Robert Lawlor's Case Going to Connecticut Supreme Court



Sgt. Lawlor with his wife, Stephanie, and their six daughters

Sgt. Robert Lawlor of Hartford, Connecticut, who was charged with manslaughter and assault for an incident in 2005, will take his case to the Connecticut Supreme Court shortly, thanks to efforts by LELDF.

The episode

occurred in a dangerous neighborhood where Sgt. Lawlor had been stabbed, shot twice, and threatened with deadly force. It started when he and an Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms special agent attempted to question two suspects who were armed and in a car being sought for a drive-by shooting and murder. The suspects, who did not comply with the officers' orders to turn off the ignition and put their hands on the dashboard, instead acted in a threatening way and tried to run over Sgt. Lawlor's partner. To save the life of his partner, Sgt. Lawlor fired at the car, fatally wounding the driver.

State's Attorney John Connelly charged him with manslaughter, a charge carrying a possible 20-year sentence. The Appeals Court ordered the Grand Jury to review its decision to indict Sgt. Lawlor and hold hearings. After this review, the Connecticut Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

A full account of the case can be seen at previous issues of *With Justice for All* archived at our website, www.LELDF.org. The Supreme Court should announce its decision shortly after the case is heard early this year.

Ray Bunn of Atlanta



Justice is taking a while in the case of Atlanta Police Officer Raymond Bunn, who was indicted in 2005 for murder, felony murder, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and violation of an oath. Hearings to dismiss the charges were denied by a Fulton County district judge. After an appeal, the Georgia

Supreme Court directed the trial judge to review his decision to dismiss the case based on officer immunity. We are waiting for a decision from the trial judge. If the motion is again denied, a trial date will be set.

LELDF has been very involved in the case. Among other legal assistance, we helped to arrange a computerized simulation of the 2002 incident. The simulation clearly demonstrates that Officer Bunn was in imminent danger of being struck by the vehicle speeding toward him — and thus he was in deadly physical danger and justified in firing at the driver.

In addition to the state charges, the family of the deceased has filed a multimillion dollar civil lawsuit against Officer Bunn and his partner, Officer Mulkey. That action is pending.

Stephanie Mohr



Officer Stephanie Mohr hopes for a break in her case, in which her police dog bit a fleeing suspect. She has been in prison since 2003.

As Stephanie Mohr completes five years in a federal prison for depriving an illegal alien and convicted criminal of his rights under color of law, there is at last some hope. Her case will be heard soon by the 4th District Circuit Court of Appeals.

Her crime was to release her police dog, under orders from her superior officer, to prevent a robbery suspect from fleeing. Her dog, Valk, bit Ricardo Mendez on his leg, but did not cause a serious or life-threatening injury. Unfortunately, Officer Mohr had poor counsel in her original trials. In the first, the jury was hung 11-to-1 for acquittal. In the second trial, her attorney did not object to what we now believe was untruthful testimony by a witness who said that Officer Mohr had used a racial slur in a previous and unrelated arrest. This charge of racism convinced the jury to convict her, and she received a 10-year sentence.

We hope a review of this case will at last bring justice to this shameful conviction. In addition, last year we filed a Petition for Commutation of Sentence with the Department of Justice and President Bush. Unfortunately, with the politically correct atmosphere on both sides of the aisle, it appears unlikely that a commutation will come to pass.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Happy New Year! We at LELDF are very grateful for your interest and support. Because of assistance from you and other loyal sponsors, we have taken up another major case — that of Officer Torrey Thompson of DeKalb County, Georgia. As in many of our other cases, Officer Torrey Thompson was confronted with a man believed to be armed, known to be dangerous, and who refused lawful orders to “stop,” “show your hands,” and “drop to the ground.” He faces the unfair charges of murder, manslaughter, and assault. If convicted, he faces a life in prison. LELDF sincerely believes that Officer Thompson should not have been charged. We hope justice will prevail.

Featured in our last issue was another Officer Thompson, Chief of Police Richard Thompson of Crawford, Nebraska, who is charged with manslaughter. If you missed this issue, you can read it online at www.policedefense.org. Chief of Police Thompson was confronted by a gun-wielding suspect who pointed the weapon at his face! What option did he have other than to use deadly force to save his own life? Although we are now waiting for a judge to rule on a motion to dismiss the case, we expect that a trial will be scheduled sometime in the next few months.

Officer Lawlor shot at a car containing a wanted felon and dangerous individual who was about to drive over his partner. Similar to Officer Ray Bunn’s scenario, Officer Lawlor knew that both he and his partner were in immediate physi-

cal danger. LELDF has engaged two experts to help with the Lawlor defense: Urey Patrick, a former FBI agent, instructor, expert in self-defense, and author of *In Defense of Self and Others: Issues, Facts & Fallacies — The Realities of Law Enforcement’s Use of Deadly Force*; and Geoffrey Taylor, an expert in computerized re-creation of incidents, who will be able to demonstrate that the use of force was not only authorized but necessary.



David Martin addresses a recent symposium, “Suicide by Cop,” at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Late last year, LELDF was a major participant in a unique symposium, “Suicide by Cop,” held at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The 15 speakers included law enforcement professionals, psychologists, an FBI agent, and mental health practitioners who gave impressive presentations followed by lively discussions with the academics, Secret Service agents, FBI agents, police, and other participants attending. It was organized by Professor Greg Saathoff, M.D., of the Critical Incident Analysis Group (CIAG). We were pleased to participate in such an important event. A compendium of the proceedings will eventually be published. I will keep you posted.

I wish you and yours a happy, healthy, and safe new year.

Sincerely,

David Henderson Martin