

Incident Summary

Officers A and B received a radio call of a domestic dispute at a residence. The comments of the call indicated that Witness A's ex-boyfriend attempted to force his dog to attack her. Officers acknowledged the call and responded.

Officers A and B arrived and parked their police vehicle on the west curb north of the residence. They exited their vehicle and approached the location, a single story apartment complex with detached garages in the back. They met with Witness A, who informed them of the incident that had occurred. The officers decided that Witness A would accompany them to the garage area to point out her specific garage.

The officers asked Witness A the breed and size of the animal, and she described a relatively small dog. Nevertheless, the officers faced the potential of encountering a pit bull dog which could be aggressive. Based on this possibility, Officer B brought the beanbag shotgun from their police vehicle. He chambered a round, making it ready for use. The officers walked to the alley with Witness A, who pointed out her garage. The garage door was closed, and the officers did not hear any sound from inside.

Officer A knocked on the door and announced they were the police twice. Both officers called out to the Subject by his name and ordered him to exit. The officers heard no response or sounds coming from inside. Officer A approached the garage door from the south and opened it. Both officers instantly saw a bluish gray, full size, adult Pit Bull dog on a chair near the north side of the door. The Subject was seen lying on the floor.

The dog immediately started to growl, jumped off the chair, and bared its teeth at Officer A. Officer A stepped backwards trying to create distance without turning his back to the dog. While holding a flashlight in his left hand, he unholstered his pistol. Officer B took one step forward and fired one round from his beanbag shotgun. Officer B observed the beanbag round strike the animal on its right side just behind the front haunch. The Pit Bull dog yelped, turned to look towards Officer B, then turned back to Officer A, bared its teeth again and charged towards him. As the dog was running, Officer B fired a second time with the beanbag shotgun.

Officer A heard Officer B fire one round from the beanbag shotgun. As the dog continued to close the distance, Officer A believed he was about to be attacked, and he fired one round at the dog in a downward northeasterly direction from a distance of approximately three feet. The Pit Bull dog yelped, ran past him, and continued east of the street, out of the officers' sight. Once the dog was no longer a threat, Officer A holstered his firearm. At this point, the officers were unaware if the dog was hit by the gunfire.

Note: The dog was found several hours later sitting on a resident's porch unharmed. It was returned to its owner.

The officers then shifted their attention to the Subject who was still lying on the floor. Officer B instructed the Subject to stand up and place his hands behind his head, which he did. Officer A approached and handcuffed him. Once the situation was safe, Officer A promptly requested a supervisor to respond to the officer-involved animal shooting (OIAS).

Sergeant A arrived at the scene and was advised of the OIAS. He separated both officers and took a Public Safety Statement from Officer A.

The Subject was detained while the domestic dispute was investigated. The subsequent investigation revealed that no felony crime had occurred. The Subject was released, and officers completed a domestic incident report.

Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners' Findings

The BOPC reviews each Categorical Use of Force incident based upon the totality of the circumstances, namely all of the facts, evidence, statements and all other pertinent material relating to the particular incident. In every case, the BOPC makes specific findings in three areas: Tactics of the involved officer(s); Drawing/Exhibiting of a firearm by any involved officer(s); and the Use of Force by any involved officer(s). All incidents are evaluated to identify areas where involved officers can benefit from a tactical debriefing to improve their response to future tactical situations. This is an effort to ensure that all officers' benefit from the critical analysis that is applied to each incident as it is reviewed by various levels within the Department and by the BOPC. Based on the BOPC's review of the instant case, the BOPC unanimously made the following findings.

A. Tactics

The BOPC found Officers A and B's tactics to warrant a Tactical Debrief.

B. Drawing and Exhibiting

The BOPC found Officer A's drawing and exhibiting of a firearm to be in policy.

C. Lethal Use of Force

The BOPC found Officer A's lethal use of force to be in policy.

Basis for Findings

A. Tactics

- In its analysis of this incident, the BOPC identified the following tactical consideration:
 - Dog Encounters
- The evaluation of tactics requires that consideration be given to the fact that officers are forced to make split-second decisions under very stressful and dynamic circumstances. Tactics are conceptual and intended to be flexible and incident specific, which requires that each incident be looked at objectively and the tactics be evaluated based on the totality of the circumstances.

After a thorough review of the incident, the BOPC determined that the identified areas for improvement neither individually nor collectively substantially deviated from approved Department tactical training. Therefore, a Tactical Debrief is the appropriate forum for the involved personnel to review and discuss the incident and individual actions that took place during this incident with the objective of improving overall organizational and individual performance.

In conclusion, the BOPC found Officers A and B's tactics to warrant a tactical debrief.

B. Drawing and Exhibiting

- Believing that a dog was in the garage, along with a potential subject, Officers A and B approached the garage door. Officer A announced the officers' presence and opened the garage door. Officers A and B then observed a large bluish-gray Pit Bull type breed dog on a chair near the north side of the garage. The dog jumped off the chair and was very aggressive, growling and baring its teeth. The Pit Bull dog continued to charge toward Officer A. Believing the dog was going to bite him, Officer A drew his service pistol.

The BOPC determined that an officer with similar training and experience, while faced with similar circumstances, would reasonably believe that there was a substantial risk that the situation may escalate to the point where deadly force may be justified.

In conclusion, the BOPC found Officer A's drawing and exhibiting of a firearm to be in policy.

C. Lethal Use of Force

- Officer A opened the garage door and observed a large Pit Bull type breed dog sitting on a chair. The dog jumped off the chair and started growling and baring its teeth at Officer A. The dog continued to charge toward Officer A. Believing the dog was going to bite him, Officer A drew his service pistol and fired one round at the dog to stop its advance.

Given the totality of the circumstances, the BOPC determined that an officer with similar training and experience as Officer A would reasonably believe that the dog posed an imminent threat of serious bodily injury and that the use of lethal force would be justified.

In conclusion, the BOPC found Officer A's lethal use of force to be in policy.