

From the Office of the Police Chief

*CHIEF JAMES SMITH
LAWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT*

19 April 2021

This is a follow up statement concerning the circumstances surrounding the event which occurred on January 17, 2021, that resulted in the loss of life of Zonterious Johnson. All loss of life is tragic for everyone involved, and the community continues to process and grieve together this very unfortunate event.

The goal of the Lawton Police Department is to ensure that critical incidents of this nature are thoroughly investigated. That is why any time there is an officer involved shooting, I immediately request the support of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation to conduct an independent, impartial, and comprehensive review of the incident, as I did in this case. We appreciate the community's patience in allowing that investigative process to be conducted.

The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation has completed its' investigation of this incident and has submitted their findings to the Comanche County District Attorney's office. The facts and narrative that can be shared are:

- On January 17, 2021 at approximately 3:30 am Lawton Police Officers were at the Lavish Lounge to conduct a compliance check. During this compliance check, there were a number of people still inside the building and a number of vehicles still in the parking lot.
- While conducting the compliance check, Officers heard shots being fired from outside the building. Those shots were not being fired by Lawton Police Officers. Body worn cameras indicate that at least ten (10) shots were fired outside the building. Officers exited the building and rushed towards the area where the shots were being fired from outside the building.
- An officer observed a male (later identified as Zonterious Johnson) standing in the street and shooting a weapon. Officer Nathan Ronan also observed Johnson standing in the street with his arm extended, heard gunshots from that area, and observed another individual near a white sport utility vehicle, shooting back at Johnson. Johnson fled from the area and Officer Ronan identified himself as a police officer, gave commands for Johnson to stop, and pursued Johnson on foot. Johnson did not stop fleeing.

- Officer Ronan then pursued Johnson onto Tenth Street and into a dark alley, where Ronan lost sight of Johnson briefly due to a privacy fence. Officer Ronan illuminated the light on his weapon, went around the corner of the fence, and observed Johnson with a weapon. Johnson raised and produced the barrel of the weapon despite Ronan's command to drop the weapon. Officer Ronan then fired his weapon at Johnson.
- Zonterious Johnson was struck twice in the chest and once in the foot.
- Officers immediately rendered medical aid to Mr. Johnson, and he was transported to Comanche County Memorial Hospital by ambulance, where he succumbed to his injuries.
- Johnson's weapon, which can be observed on the officer's body camera, was recovered by OSBI. The weapon was determined to be a Taurus Model 9mm with an empty twelve (12) round capacity magazine. The slide was in the "locked back" position.
- OSBI also recovered seven (7) Speer 9mm Luger spent cartridge casings outside the Lavish Lounge that were identified as having been fired by the weapon recovered from Johnson. OSBI also recovered a fired bullet inside the Lavish Lounge which was determined to be consistent with bullets typically loaded in 9mm Luger cartridges. No City of Lawton Police Officer on scene was carrying a 9mm weapon. The weapon recovered from Johnson was determined to have been purchased by an individual in Wichita Kansas, who is a relative of Darezane Porter, who has children with and was reportedly in a relationship with Johnson.
- OSBI forensic reports show that Johnson's fingerprint was found on the magazine of his weapon.
- OSBI continues to investigate the related matter regarding the individual observed outside the Lavish Lounge near or in a white sport utility vehicle shooting back at Zonterious Johnson.

The Comanche County District Attorney's Office has thoroughly reviewed the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation report and has cleared the Officer involved of any wrongdoing. With the completion of OSBI's investigation and the findings of the Comanche County District Attorney, the officer's body camera footage has been released to the media and requesting parties.

The Lawton Police Department's mission is to continue to strengthen ties between the Lawton Fort Sill community and the Department. The Lawton Police Department continues to lift the family in prayer. The outpouring of support is appreciated from the community as we continue to navigate through this period of healing.

-James Smith

Lawton Police Chief