



John J. Choi

Remarks as prepared for delivery regarding the death of Philando Castile
July 8, 2016
10:30AM

Good Morning

Before I begin my remarks this morning, I want to issue a call to our nation for peace. I know people are angry, frustrated, devastated - and they have a right to be. And I commend all of the thousands of people who have channeled their emotions into peaceful protests by coming together across this country to demand change.

There is no justification for what happened in Dallas last night. As one of our nation's heroes, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said:

*Violence multiplies violence.
Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*

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The recent events of the officer-involved shooting incident resulting in the death of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights are tragic and sad in so many ways.

I understand many of the emotions being expressed by our community and elected officials. I, too, am disheartened by the tragic events that unfolded Wednesday night in our community.

While we don't yet have all the facts, we do know that the loss of Philando Castile is being mourned throughout our community and I want to especially express my sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family, his friends and school community at JJ Hill Montessori.

We must do better, in our state and in our nation, to improve police/community interactions to ensure the safety of everyone in this country, but particularly the safety of African Americans, who disproportionately lose their lives as a result.

As you know, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension has already begun its investigation and released preliminary information last night. My staff has been working closely with the BCA agents assigned to this case since yesterday morning.

I have spoken to the Superintendent of the BCA, Drew Evans, and he has assured me that they are making this investigation a top priority. I have asked for a prompt and thorough investigation. Both of these goals are equally important to uphold.

Once they have concluded their investigation, they will present the case to our office for prosecution review. It has long been the practice of this office to present such cases to a grand jury. I believe there are benefits to doing so, however, I will decide how best to proceed at a later time, after additional thought and conversations with my senior leadership staff.

Regardless of whether the decision to prosecute is made by the residents of Ramsey County through the grand jury process or by this office, the law remains the same:

The use of deadly force by a police officer is justified only when necessary to protect the officer or another from apparent death or great bodily harm.

In order to bring criminal charges against a police officer for using deadly force in the line of duty, Minnesota law requires the State to be able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the use of force was not justified.

If the grand jury determines charges are warranted in this case or this office makes that decision, I assure you that we will prosecute this case to the fullest extent of the law.

In times like these, I understand it is incredibly difficult to be patient. But above all else, in order to achieve justice, we must ensure that this process is carried out with the utmost integrity.

It is incumbent upon us, as investigators and prosecutors, to not jump to conclusions, but to view our work as a sacred trust with our community. Our system of democracy depends on our ability to diligently follow the facts and remain faithful to the pursuit of justice.

The last thing I want to add is that, regardless of the outcome of this case, it is clear to me that we need to come together as a community – law enforcement included – to improve our practices and procedures so we don't experience any more of these tragedies, ever again.

Thank you.