

Thursday, June 21, 2012

DOTHANEAGLE

dothaneagle.com

Real people. Real news.

75 cents

Today: Mostly sunny.

High 90°
Low 70°



Southern Baptists get new leader, new name 8A



Egypt delays announcing winner 13A



NFL star hosts high school camp 1B



Ozark Shooting

Grand jury: Officer justified

BY EBONY HORTON
ehorton@dothaneagle.com

OZARK — An Ozark Police Department officer is expected to return to work after a Dale County grand jury found he was justified in his decision to shoot a machete-wielding man last week.

Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams said an in-car video camera clip, a 911 recording and

witness statements were among evidence on Wednesday that cleared Officer

Jeremy Thomas in the shooting, which happened Friday. Ozark Police Chief Tony Spivey had placed Thomas on paid administrative pending following the incident pending results of an investigation Spivey



Overstreet

"In this case I can't express how crucial it was for the camera to be there, because the suspect threw the machete 20 feet after he was shot."

Kirke Adams,
Dale County district attorney

requested from the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, as well the results of the grand jury's decision after ABl presented the case on Wednesday.

toward him with a machete, refusing multiple commands by Thomas to release the weapon.

Authorities said Thomas shot Overstreet twice in the chest. Overstreet later died at Dale Medical Center.

Authorities said alcohol may have been a factor. Results of an autopsy are expected soon.

See **SHOOTING**, Page 2A

Shooting

From Page 1A

Adams said a camera inside Thomas' patrol vehicle revealed Thomas acted in full compliance with the police department's policies in giving Overstreet verbal orders to release his weapon and shooting Overstreet well within the distance in which officers can use deadly force.

The interaction between Overstreet and Thomas was about 10 seconds, Adams said.

"In this case I can't express how crucial it was for the camera to be there, because the suspect threw the machete 20 feet after he was shot," Adams said.

"A question would have been why the machete was so far away if the officer said the suspect was advancing toward him with a weapon. In an incident such as this, a camera helps answer questions very quickly."

Spivey said officer-involved shootings have increased over the last five years, though Friday's incident was the first for Ozark this year.

Spivey said the main factor in determining whether to use deadly force is whether the suspect is an immediate danger or threat to the officer or the public.

Spivey said any Ozark officer involved in a shooting is required to undergo psychological sessions by the department's counselor before the officer is cleared to return to duty.

"One must remember this is a traumatic experience for any officer and I have an obligation to the public to ensure that the officer is fit for service," Spivey said.

"This incident is certainly very unfortunate for the officer as well as the family of Mr. Overstreet. Officers train constantly for the possibility this may occur, but certainly no one desires to be faced with the situation."