



IDAHO FALLS FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

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*****For Immediate Release***
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The events of February 8, 2021, illustrate perhaps the most difficult situations a law enforcement officer can find themselves in. A split-second decision in response to a critical incident is at the heart of every officer's training. Believing he was protecting the community and other officers by engaging an armed suspect fleeing from police, Officer Cerdas acted on that training.

That decision has real world consequences. Anytime a law enforcement encounter ends in the loss of life, it is tragic. It is so, whether that loss be of an officer, a suspect, or in this case a homeowner. Because this case involves a homeowner, that tragedy feels even more pronounced. The facts and circumstances leading to that result do not change what was apparent to officers at the scene.

Officer Cerdas encountered a situation where he was advised that an armed suspect had fled police. This suspect was reportedly running through the neighborhood armed with a handgun. The suspect had warrants for his arrest and officers from multiple agencies were searching the area.

Officer Cerdas, along with two other officers, was drawn to Mr. Johnson's backyard in response to shouting, presumably by Mr. Johnson. Upon making his way to the back yard, Officer Cerdas encountered a man matching the description of the suspect armed with a firearm. Commands were given to drop the weapon.

This was a lethal force situation which resulted, sadly, in the death of Mr. Johnson. Officers have seconds to assess a scene and sometimes less than a second to make a life and death decision. We do not need to make a split-second decision now.

The decision to indict Officer Elias Cerdas of the Idaho Falls Police Department shows that due process works when we allow it to. While the Idaho Falls FOP disagrees with the decision of the grand jury, we respect it. We have faith in the process and urge the community be patient as the details of this incident develop.

No officer wants to be involved in a lethal force situation. We prepare for the possibility

and train under rigorous conditions to ensure that we keep both ourselves and the public safe. Safety of all is of paramount concern in any engagement. Resulting harm to all can be catastrophic.

We pray for peace and healing in our community as we move forward in the coming days.

Sincerely,

The Idaho Falls Fraternal Order of Police Executive Board