



# Cheyenne Police Department

2020 Capitol Ave  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001  
<http://www.cheyennepd.org>



Protecting the legend...

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Update: July Officer Involved Shooting**

CHEYENNE, Wyo.— The Cheyenne Police Department responded to 215 Stinson Avenue on July 16, 2015 at 5:04 p.m. in reference to a call of a man who was threatening others with a firearm.

Saige Hack, 22, of Cheyenne, fired at officers with a pistol as they approached the home. The officers returned fire as they retreated. The SWAT team responded and found Hack dead inside the home.

The Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigations (DCI) conducted an independent investigation of the shooting, which was released to Chief Brian Kozak on October 6, 2015. The case remains under investigation by DCI due to pending lab reports; however, the police can release the following facts:

On July 16, 2015 Hack and his girlfriend, Fernanda Melero, 20, of Cheyenne, began to argue about Hack's use of alcohol. Melero went outside to be in the presence of neighbors, hoping Hack would stop arguing. Hack came outside and threatened to kill everyone if the "cops show up". Hack went back in the home and Melero followed him. The neighbors then heard a gunshot in Hack's home and relayed this information to the police dispatcher. Melero later relayed that Hack pointed the gun at his head and then fired a round into the floor.

Sgt. Durante, a 10-year veteran of CPD, and Officer Younkin, a 3-year member of CPD, arrived on scene. Both officers responded to the front of 215 Stinson with their .223 caliber patrol rifles, believing that Melero was in danger inside the home. As they approached the front door, Hack pointed a 9mm semi-automatic pistol at the officers and fired. Both officers immediately returned fire as they rapidly retreated to cover, unaware if they hit Hack. They established a perimeter on the home as Melero exited the rear door to safety.

Since Melero was no longer in danger, the SWAT team and Crisis Negotiation Team were called to attempt contact with Hack. After a search warrant was obtained a SWAT robot entered the home and found Hack lying face down in a bedroom with a pistol lying next to him. SWAT



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officers and a paramedic entered the home and confirmed Hack's death.

The DCI investigation revealed that Hack fired his handgun six times in the living room. One bullet was found in the front yard, indicating that Hack indeed fired at the police officers. Hack's fingerprint was on the firearm and he had gunshot residue on his face and hands. The autopsy of Hack showed that a .223 bullet struck him in the front of his chest. He had a blood alcohol content of .373%.

Both officers were placed on administrative leave, which is standard procedure following an incident such as this. The officers returned to duty two weeks after the incident following clearance from the police department's psychologists.

Police Chief Brian Kozak said that we will never know what motivated Hack to try to kill the police officers. His record did not reveal a propensity to violence; it appeared excessive intoxication may have been the primary causation factor.

"I am humbled by the fact that Sgt. Durante and Officer Younkin did not hesitate to place themselves in harms way to protect an unknown person. At the same time, the agency never desires to use deadly force and extends sympathy to Mr. Hack's family. It was a tragic situation for all involved," said Kozak. "I am very concerned with the recent lethal attacks on police officers in Cheyenne and hope this is not a continuing trend," Kozak added.

The Cheyenne Police Department will convene a use of force review board to determine if the involved officers acted within departmental policy, which is done whenever deadly force is used. Chief Kozak does not foresee any issues since it is very obvious that the officers had to use their firearms to save their lives. "We were very fortunate that they were not hit by gunfire," said Kozak.