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**NEWS RELEASE**

Date/Time of Release: Tuesday, December 16, 2024  
From: Jenna Wallace, District Attorney  
Details: Officer Involved Shooting November 10, 2024

On Friday, December 13, 2024, the Lincoln County Grand Jury found that Lincoln County Sheriff's Deputy Ben Cloud was justified in his use of deadly physical force against Virginia Lee Morris, age 38, on November 10, 2024.

The Grand Jury convened for two days and heard testimony from 11 witnesses, including the Lincoln City Police Department who led the investigation. The Grand Jury reviewed multiple video exhibits and further examined photographs, firearms, and autopsy conclusions. The following is a factual summary of the investigation:

On November 10, 2024, Virginia Morris was at her residence located at 1015 SE Rolf Court, Waldport, OR. At approximately 4:50 pm, a resident in the neighborhood called 911 and reported that a female (later identified as Virginia Lee Morris) was screaming at the location and had been for approximately 10 minutes. This location is a dense residential neighborhood.

At approximately 5:04 pm, Virginia Lee Morris called 911. She told the dispatcher that her neighbors had been recording her and trying to provoke her. She said that if officers did not respond she would have to open fire and retaliate herself. When asked if she had any weapons, Morris refused to answer. When asked if she would be violent with officers, Morris said she would draw her gun on officers if they drew their gun on her. The dispatcher noted that Morris was rambling and becoming more verbally aggressive.

A Lincoln County deputy contacted Morris by phone and spoke with her. Morris admitted to consuming alcohol and celebrating the Marine Corps birthday. The deputy noted that Morris was calm at the beginning of the conversation but became irate as the conversation continued. Morris told the deputy that she was not concerned with shedding blood if she had to.

At approximately 6:06 pm, Morris called 911 and made threats that if her neighbors didn't stop bothering her, we would need a coroner. Morris then hung up.

At approximately 6:37 pm, a worker with the Veteran's Crisis Line called 911 and reported that Morris had contacted them. The worker told the 911 dispatcher that Morris was homicidal and told the worker that it was time for her neighbors to die. Morris also told the worker that it was going to be "bloody" and she was going to enjoy watching them "chomp on the concrete".

At approximately 7:06 pm, a worker with the Veteran's Crisis Line called 911 and said that Morris called them back and said she had a loaded AK47 and would shoot anyone who knocked on her door. The worker further stated that Morris was a frequent caller of the Crisis Line and seemed intoxicated.

At approximately 7:10 pm, another resident of the neighborhood called 911 and reported that his girlfriend, who resides next door to Morris, told him she heard a single gunshot from inside Morris' residence approximately 5 minutes prior.

A deputy contacted this witness, who reported that Morris had been screaming for hours and this resident had heard a loud bang come from the direction of Morris' residence. She reported that after the loud bang, Morris ran outside screaming to herself and yelling nonsense. Morris then went back into her residence and continued to scream.

At approximately 7:39 pm, 911 received several calls reporting multiple gunshots coming from Morris' property.

Lincoln County Sheriff's deputies were enroute during this time and Deputy Cloud arrived on scene at approximately 7:46 pm.

Deputy Cloud took an observation position approximately 30 yards from Morris' residence while waiting for additional officers to respond. During this time, Morris exited the front of her residence holding a rifle. Deputy Cloud ordered Morris to drop her weapon. Morris did not comply with this command and turned towards Deputy Cloud, pointing the rifle at him. Deputy Cloud fired his weapon in response until Morris fell to the ground. Assisting deputies responded to the scene and rendered aid to Morris with Deputy Cloud. Deputies located a loaded AK-47 beneath Morris. Morris was transported by ambulance to Pacific Communities Hospital but was pronounced deceased while enroute.

The Lincoln County Major Crime Team (MCT) was activated and conducted the investigation into the use of deadly force. Lincoln City Police Department Detective Bud Lane led the investigation. Detectives from the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, Lincoln City Police Department, Newport Police Department, Toledo Police Department, Corvallis Police Department, and Oregon State Police participated in the investigation.

An autopsy was conducted by the State Medical Examiner's Office on November 13, 2024, who determined Morris' cause of death was from gunshot wounds. Morris had a large wound in the armpit area of the right arm and a large piece of silver colored metal was removed from that wound.

Overall, the investigation showed that Morris fired her gun in and/or around her property at least 10 times prior to Deputy Cloud arriving on scene. In total, Deputy Cloud, who has been employed with the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office for 11 years, fired 13 rounds from his rifle.

No neighbors, bystanders or deputies were injured during this incident.

Morris had no prior criminal convictions.

The Grand Jury applied the facts of this case to the legal principles dictating circumstances when deadly physical force can be used. Specifically, the Grand Jury found that, under the totality of the

circumstances known to Deputy Cloud, he reasonably determined that the use of deadly physical force was necessary as:

- Deadly physical force was necessary to defend a peace officer and/or another person from the use of threatened imminent use of deadly physical force;
- Under the totality of the circumstances existing at the time and place, the use of such force was justified.

The Grand Jury further found that no reasonable alternatives, such as verbal de-escalation, waiting or using other available techniques or resources was reasonable, safe or feasible to Deputy Cloud at the time he used deadly physical force.

Under Oregon law, a District Attorney or Grand Jury, made up of Lincoln County residents, may make the final decision as to whether or not law enforcement officers were justified in their use of deadly force. This case was presented to the Grand Jury by District Attorney Jenna Wallace. The Grand Jury's decision required reviewing all the facts and evidence available and applying them to the legal principles above. The Grand Jury concluded that the actions of Lincoln County Sheriff's Deputy Benjamin Cloud on November 10, 2024 were justified and lawful.