PRESS RELEASE

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FAIRBANKS, Alaska

Fairbanks Police identify the officer involved in the shooting on 8/30/16 as Sergeant Gregory Foster. Sgt. Foster is an 18 year veteran of the Fairbanks Police Department.

On Tuesday August 30, 2016 the Fairbanks Police Department responded to reports of an assault and shots fired at the Alaska Motel. The suspect, James Robert Richards, assaulted the occupants and then left the room still armed. As officers arrived at the Alaska Motel parking lot, bystanders were yelling, "He's the shooter!" and pointing at Richards.

Officers approached Richards as he was walking away from the Alaska Motel. Richards was armed with a gun. Officers issued commands to drop the gun and Richards began to walk away from officers. Officers followed Richards repeating commands and pleading with Richards to drop the gun.

Richards refused to drop the gun and officers attempted to use less-lethal Tasers on two occasions. The Tasers were ineffective.

Richards began to cross Cushman Street, then abruptly changed directions and approached an elderly man at a bus stop near 15th Avenue. Richards grabbed the elderly man by his arm, shielding himself from officers. Richards held onto the elderly hostage's arm and continued north while ignoring officers' repeated commands to drop the gun.

Sgt. Foster discharged his firearm twice. The gunshot wounds were fatal. An autopsy conducted on 09/01/2016 by the State Medical Examiner's Office confirmed that Richards died as a result of two frontal gunshot wounds.

The elderly hostage was not injured. No other officers discharged their firearms during this incident.

The investigation into this incident is continuing and anyone with information regarding this incident should contact investigators at the Fairbanks Police Department at 907-450-6500 and reference case 16-2703.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the case will be turned over to the Alaska Department of Law to determine if the use of force was legally justified under Alaska law.

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Fairbanks Police Department

Case 16-2703