NH AG clears DEA in botched drug raid, says shooting of grandmother was 'simply accidental'

By MARK HAYWARD
New Hampshire Union Leader

MANCHESTER — The shooting of a grandmother during a drug raid this summer was accidental and no charges will be brought against the federal agent involved, New Hampshire Attorney General Joseph Foster announced Thursday.

Lillian Alonzo, 49, suffered non-life-threatening injuries when she was shot in her 110 Beech St. apartment on Aug. 27.

The investigation determined that the handgun of Drug Enforcement Administration Agent Michael Connolly discharged when the agent tried to kick in a locked bedroom door and lost his balance.

The report said Connolly will not face criminal charges.

While the shooting was serious and unfortunate, the report reads, it was accidental.

“There is no evidence of serious blameworthiness in this conduct,” it says.

Alonzo has returned to her apartment, said her son in a telephone interview from Florida. No one was home when a reporter and photographer visited Thursday afternoon.

The son, Daniel Nunez, said the bullet, which went through Alonzo's left arm and penetrated her...
torso, remains lodged in her ribs. Medicaid has not paid for Alonzo’s physical therapy, which he said she needs to regain control of the arm.

He said that based on the layout of the room, he thinks it is impossible that his mother could have been shot by someone who was facing the door.

“She says she was innocent,” he said his mother told him after the shooting. She then added: “I don’t know why they came to my home.”

In the meantime, the apartment was ransacked and furniture was destroyed in a fruitless search for drugs, he said.

“They should give my mom the help she needs. They destroyed everything; they tore up the apartment,” Nunez said. He said the DEA should apologize for its actions.

The raid coincided with the arrest of two of Alonzo’s adult daughters and others on trafficking charges involving oxycodone. The family has said no drugs or weapons were found in Alonzo’s Beech Street apartment.

Alonzo has not been charged with any crimes, and federal prosecutors have said that is unlikely.

The DEA referred a reporter to Foster’s office, and would not respond to an email asking about an apology and therapy bills.

“Thanks for the opportunity ... but we have nothing to add,” DEA spokesman Anthony Pettigrew said.

According to the eight-page report, Alonzo, along with a friend named Delores Minaya, Alonzo’s daughter and Alonzo’s two grandchildren, were in the apartment at the time of the raid.

Alonzo told authorities she was in the kitchen with at least five officers, who were armed with long guns. “She heard a shot and then felt the shot,” the report said.

Alonzo, her 10-year-old daughter and Minaya gave brief statements to authorities at the scene, but Attorney General’s Office investigators could not find them later, the report said. In her initial comments, Minaya told authorities that she and Alonzo were grabbing the children when Alonzo was shot.

Alonzo’s family has been speaking to an attorney about the incident, Nunez said.

Connolly and officers involved in the raid consented to interviews, the report reads.

Once the six armed agents entered the apartment, they quickly searched the bedrooms.

One was locked, and Connolly kicked the locked door twice to open it. The second time, his boot went through the hollow door, which splintered and caught the boot as he tried to retract his leg.

“Because he was caught with his left foot in the door, Connolly began to stumble toward his right shoulder, falling into the open room where he was standing,” the report reads.

As he stumbled backward, he heard a gunshot. Once he regained his feet, Connolly saw his left arm was locked and the handgun looked extremely black.

“He saw his trigger finger along the slide of the gun. He did not remember feeling recoil.
“He felt time slow down and wondered if the shot he heard was from him. He wondered how that happened,” the report reads.

As Connolly regained his hearing, he realized that his fellow officers thought they were being shot at. Connolly holstered his gun and told his fellow officers he had an accidental discharge.

The report concluded that Connolly had exercised reasonable care.

His handgun was pointed down and his finger was off the trigger while kicking the door.

“It was only because he fell backward and his left hand hit the door frame that the gun fired,” the report reads.

Alonzo’s daughters still face federal drug charges; they are grown women and should know better, Nunez said.

But he said his mother has nothing to do with drugs and doesn’t even drink alcohol.

“That woman has killed not even a cockroach,” he said

mhayward@unionleader.com

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- Links to outside URLs are discouraged, if used they should be on topic.
- Avoid comments in bad taste, write well, avoid using all capital letters
- Don't cite facts about individuals or businesses without providing a means to verify the claim
Mike Redding said:

NH AG clears DEA agent. Wow, that is news. Has there ever been a finding contrary to any policing organization? Didn't think so. Pretty freaking sad to see what we have become - a full fledged police state. If I walk into the DEA agent's office and fall down and my gun discharges, will I receive the same justice. I don't think so.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 12:20 pm

James Hancock said:

Ya, there's a term for accidental murder: Manslaughter. Us mundanes would be charged, but because it's law enforcement "oh well". I hope the family sues for wrongful death and teaches these fools a lesson. Qualified immunity should never cover killing an innocent bystander because it gives the police carte blanche to recklessly act and risk the people that they're sworn to protect.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 12:36 pm

James Hancock said:

Sorry, attempted Manslaughter. I thought she died. Same deal.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 12:37 pm

WAYNE STANLEY said:

There is no such thing as an "accidental" shooting. MICHAEL CONNOLLY loaded the weapon. MICHAEL CONNOLLY drew the weapon. MICHAEL CONNOLLY chambered a round. MICHAEL CONNOLLY removed the safety. MICHAEL CONNOLLY placed his finger on the trigger. MICHAEL CONNOLLY shot an unarmed woman. There is nothing accidental about that.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 12:52 pm

RONALD A. GAUDREaulT said:

He saw his trigger finger along the slide of the gun.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 1:11 pm

Mike Houst said:

Of course "he saw his trigger finger along the slide of the gun"; he's not going to admit he violated proper procedures and actually had his finger inside the guard and on the trigger; which anyone who actually knows anything about handguns knows is what really happened.DEA Agent Michael Connolly at the very least should be held personally financially responsible for all medical expenses and possible lost wages of Lillian Alonzo; as well as be suspended without pay for 6 months. And to top it off, this was a raid at 7 PM, they tore up her apartment and and they didn't find a single drug. Neither of Alonzo's daughter's live with her, so the so-called testimony of their confidential informant (who is actually probably another drug dealer), there were young children known to be in the apartment; all this adds up to complete and utter incompetence and disregard to the public's safety by the DEA raid team. Every one of the agents involved should be docked 6 months pay, and their supervisors should be docked a full years pay of this debacle. We really need to decriminalize drug use and possession and terminate this entire department of fascist tyranny.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 1:41 pm

Jared Cox said:

I would like to see the NH AG be an elected official.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 2:53 pm

WAYNE STANLEY said:

@Jared Cox - or at least a recall mechanism through the executive council.

(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 3:18 pm

Linda Brown said:

Most of the time I am on the side of law enforcement but in this case I take exception. This raid was botched before they even entered the home and what I mean by this, they did not have all of the info as to who in the home might be dealing drugs and who all lived there and who did not, and they stomped the place like Navy Seals and the officer, the one who shot the woman should have had the safety on on his gun and if this was not such a serious case, I would liken it to a case of the KEYSTONE COPS! Also kinda like shoot and ask questions later? Ya know this happens in this country more you know. There have been many reports of incidents like this and in FL their drug task force stormed the home of an elderly preacher and threw him and his wife to the floor which such force he dies a day later inf ron severe trauma to his brain! And
of course they did not find any drugs and this angered many in the community which is mostly African American and the force's PR person don't to admit this, but their final EXCUSE/FINDING WAS, "it was a case of mistaken identity" In other words THEY HIT THE WRONG HOUSE! And the wife who was clearly traumatized just from being forcefully taken out of her bed as this was a night time raid and then her husband is injured so bad he dies? Now of course the family sued, but they lost their loved one and their community lost their long term pillar of the community! The house that they were supposed to raid was further down the block and I remembered reading about this on CNN and I was so appalled that a police agency did not do their homework and these macho men crash down their door and then treat them like they were scum of the earth? Now this woman here was SHOT and like Mike Houst states, the daughters did not live with this woman, and if they wanted them so bad, you would think they would KNOW firsthand where they do live! Seems to me they did not look into things before acting in haste, so hepped up, wanting this bust so bad! Now I don't condone drug activity of any kind and these agencies have to bust these morons and get the drugs off the streets and lately it seems that heroin is rearing it's ugly head everywhere even more so than a yr ago? Where I live a woman died at a McD's last week right in a booth of a heroin OD and a day before that, a man was found dead of the same in back of a building and I don't know what it is up sometimes with this part of MI but they seem to have a lot of intentional OD's like the cries for attention variety and it is mostly their RX meds or Tylenol? But some have succeeded by using pain killers like Vicodin. I live in constant pain I would not know what it is like to not live with it, and I have had some dark moments where I thought about it myself, but I am too strong for that and I have three cats that I love to pieces and would not want to leave them behind. I take pain meds, but after being on them for 10 yrs it is so old it is pathetic. but without them I would be climbing the walls in pain. So I don't support this debacle of a raid here and Thank God the woman survived otherwise that officer could possibly be facing manslaughter charges at the very least. Another thing some of these macho officers dig is that Tazer and We have all seen reports about how they Tazed a pregnant woman, to an 89 yr old woman, to a three yr old kid who got caught in the crossfire when some cops were trying to Taze his father and they are an effective tool if used properly. I have also read articles where they tazed this guy and the first shot did not even garner a whimper out of him, he was hyped up on bath salts and did not feel a thing and they even pepper sprayed him and that did not faze him either and they had no choice but to shoot him in a non fatal manner and it was just a flesh wound, but that brought him down. So this is not acceptable what that cop did to this woman and I would imagine her trust level of them now is less than zero and who can blame her? Was this serving and protecting? (Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 5:43 pm

Linda Brown said:

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(Report Abuse) November 6, 2014 5:43 pm

joe kelly levasseur said:

I would like to say something, but then I would be accused by this paper of hating someone. What a tragedy. All I can say is thank goodness this woman was not killed. Thank goodness indeed.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 12:33 am

DUANE RILEY said:

The bottom line... these criminal THUGS had NO business knocking down the door of this woman just because her kids /grand kids are suspected of dealing drugs ! This is outrageous !!!

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 6:04 am

DUANE RILEY said:

I will say again ! There needs to be civilians sitting in on these finding /investigations to ensure there are no cover ups and kiss on the lips deals / protection cover ups ! LE and AGs don't like it ... TOUGH ! You work for US !

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 6:25 am

David Partridge said:

Shock, surprise and awe, we investigated ourselves, and found we did nothing wrong.There is no such thing as an accidental discharge of a firearm in this circumstance, the team member kicking in the door should not have his weapon at the ready, he should have 2 other team members behind him to rush the room after he kicks in the door as he withdraws after having done so, and ONLY THEN should he have drawn his weapon to follow them into the room. Poor procedural practice all the way around.All of which is beside the fact that there should have been no raid in the first place, no drugs was found in the apartment, no large sums of cash to be confiscated, and shock surprise and awe, She will not be compensated for the damage they have done to her, or her apartment.All hail the police state, in the now defunct "live free or die state" I guess the DIE part of that now bygone motto is the only part that still rings true.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 7:08 am

Curt Howard said:

http://www.unionleader.com/article/20141106/NEWS03/141109367
Sovereign Immunity must be abolished. This "war on people" must be abolished. How many more people must die, how many more lives destroyed, how much more corruption is "enough" before people do with drugs what was done with alcohol? Prohibition does not work.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 7:23 am

Harrison Brown said:

Linda Brown - Thank you for your essay on drugs. The so called "War on Drugs" has cost Americans Billions of Dollars over decades. What do we have to show for our investment? From my observation, not only have we lost the War and exhausted Billions of Tax Dollars, innocent people like this Grandmother are being shot. I get the whole Heroin, Cocaine,Marijuana, blah, blah, blah. Heck, back in the 1960's you got caught with a Nickel bag of Weed, you did hard time. How dumb is that?My opinion of the whole matter, is legalize everything. Once you stop chasing it the problems surrounding it will disappear. Instead of wasting Billions of Dollars fighting Heroin. Give the junkies free drugs and needles. They'd stop committing crimes to support their habits.My point being, The War on Drugs is an Industry. Law Enforcement makes money, Lawyers make money, (follow the $$$ trail), while innocent people lose. It's the same as the booze. Imagine if Prohibition was still in effect. Look at the Industry created in that disaster. All Prohibition did was create Organized Crime, that Law Enforcement found a way to make money and legitimize their existence.It's the same thing as The War on Drugs.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 8:13 am

George LeMont said:

Harrison Brown unfortunately your plan to legalize all drugs would cost us no less money. The left has already done away with personal responsibility and personal accountability for our actions and choices. So rather than spending the money on law enforcement we would be spending it on disability and mental health payment and all the drug addicts who need those of us not doing drugs and working to buy them Obamacare. And if we sealed the southern border we could do something about illegals aliens and drug trafficking at the same time. But that would require leadership and we don't have any.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 8:36 am

PAUL LUNDWALL said:

Mike Redding Great Post.

(Report Abuse) November 7, 2014 9:17 am

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