Weare shooting: 5 officers involved

AG investigation:
One officer fired fatal shot.

Staff Report

Nearly six months after police fatally shot a suspected heroin dealer in Weare, state prosecutors for the first time disclosed the names of all five officers involved in the undercover operation — but refused to specify who fired their weapons.

Prosecutors also for the first time revealed that just one officer shot and killed Alex Cora DeJesus, 35, of Manchester on Aug. 14 at Lanctot's Plaza on Route 114. The New Hampshire Attorney General's office previously maintained two officers that fired at and wounded DeJesus.

And prosecutors reiterated that the investigation of whether the shooting was a justified use of deadly force will take at least two more months.

“This case has numerous factors that have resulted in a more lengthy and complex investigation. As a result, additional investigative avenues are being pursued,” New Hampshire Attorney General Joseph A. Foster said in a statement Wednesday.

Senior Assistant Attorney General Susan G. Morrell, who is the lead prosecutor, would not say the reason for the delay.

Morrell said the investigation has progressed to a point where the names of all five officers can be released.

“Up until now, we believed there was a good investigative purpose in not releasing those names. And, at this point, we feel it will not compromise our investigation to release those names,” Morrell said.

The officers are Sgt. Joseph

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Kelly, Sgt. Kenneth Cox, Detective Frank Hebert, Officer Nicolas Nadeau and Officer Brandon Montplaisir.

Kelley was fired shortly after John Velleca took over as chief Nov. 1.

“I believe Kelley was in command of the situation that night,” Velleca said, declining to comment further.

The other four officers remain on the force. Of them, two fired their weapons, according to an initial description of the incident by the Attorney General’s Office. It appears only one struck DeJesus and killed him. DeJesus died early the
next day, his father said.

Jose Cora of Manchester told the Union Leader last month his son was unarmed and had no illicit drugs on him when he was shot.

The two officers involved in the shooting immediately were placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

Shortly after being sworn in as chief, Velleca brought them back to work on restricted duty to help reduce overtime costs in the short-staffed department.

If investigators find the use of deadly force was not justified, the officers potentially could face criminal charges, Morrell said.

Velleca said he looks forward to the completion of the probe and the release of the report to help move the department forward.

“It surely lowers morale and it hampers my ability to move this department forward. But, at the same time, we do know the value of a complete and thorough investigation,” Velleca said. Jose Cora said he is pleased to know authorities will take the time to do a thorough investigation.

He said he would like to know the names of the two officers who were the shooters, and was unaware a total of five officers were involved.