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Official: Cop commits suicide after stun gun death

NEW YORK (AP) -- A police lieutenant committed suicide Thursday, days after he ordered another officer to fire a stun gun at a naked, distraught man who then fell to his death, police said.

The body of Lt. Michael Pigott, a 21-year police veteran, was found in a police locker room at a former airfield in Brooklyn, New York, dead apparently of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, said Paul Browne, deputy commissioner for public information. He used a weapon that was not his, police said.

Pigott had been stripped of his gun and badge and reassigned to desk duty after the September 24 case in which police, summoned by the mother of an emotionally disturbed man, fired a Taser stun gun as he perched on a ledge.

The man, Iman Morales, fell 10 feet to his death as onlookers screamed. An onlooker's video of the encounter was seen on news stations and posted on the Web. Almost immediately, police said the use of the stun gun appeared to violate department guidelines, which explicitly bar their use "in situations where the subject may fall from an elevated surface."

Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly ordered refresher training on how to deal with the mentally ill and appointed a new commander of the Emergency Service Unit, which handles such cases. Pigott, a member of the unit, killed himself at the unit's headquarters at Floyd Bennett Field. On Wednesday, Pigott had apologized, saying he was "truly sorry."

Witnesses and neighbors said Morales, 35, had become distraught and threatened to kill himself. His mother called 911. When police arrived, he fled naked out the window of his third-floor apartment onto the fire escape. He tried unsuccessfully to get into a fourth-floor apartment, then climbed down until he reached a ledge over a shuttered storefront. He then stood there, jabbing at officers with an 8-foot fluorescent light.

The lieutenant ordered another officer to fire the stun gun. The 50,000-volt shock immobilized Morales, who then toppled headfirst to the ground.

Officers had radioed for an inflatable bag, but it had not yet arrived when Morales fell. Thursday was Pigott's 46th birthday. Kelly expressed condolences to his family and said he had "served with dedication."