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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Family of Putney man killed by police sues the state

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####BEGIN SUBHED####

Suit filed after Vt. attorney general office declines to
prosecute state trooper who fatally shot Scott Garvey in his home
as he was experiencing a mental health crisis

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

The family of an unarmed Putney man who was shot and
killed by a Vermont state trooper last year is suing the state,
alleging the incident violated the man's civil rights.

Scott Garvey, 55, was shot and killed in his home by
Vermont State Police Trooper Peter Romeo while he was
experiencing a mental health crisis on July 7, 2025. His family

12 announced on June 29 they are filing a civil lawsuit against the
13 state, trooper Romeo, and other state police officers.

14 Their lawsuit came less than a week after Vermont
15 Attorney General Charity Clark declined to prosecute Romeo for
16 killing Garvey. In a June 23 press statement, Clark said officers
17 had a legal basis to use lethal force.

18 The Garvey family's 19-page lawsuit reviewed by
19 VTDigger alleges the state and its police officers violated
20 Garvey's rights under the U.S. Constitution and the state
21 constitution, including Garvey's protections against unreasonable
22 search and seizure and his right to due process.

23 The lawsuit also alleges that officers violated The
24 Americans with Disabilities Act and acted with negligence.

25 "We would have preferred to work with the State of
26 Vermont on reforming the system so that this does not happen to
27 another family," said Shawn Garvey, Scott's brother, in a
28 statement to media.

29 "But after nearly a year, the message from the State has
30 been clear: no accountability, no meaningful explanation, no
31 reform, and no apparent willingness to examine what went
32 wrong," Shawn said.

33 Romeo shot and killed Garvey when police entered the
34 man's apartment with a warrant and Garvey pointed an object at
35 officers. That object was not a gun — his family says it was
36 Garvey's cane.

37 Before entering, police spent more than four hours
38 talking to Garvey through his front door. Officers responded that
39 morning after neighbors witnessed a man banging on the
40 windows to their house, saying he heard voices that told him to
41 kill everyone.

42 Along with trooper Romeo, the family is suing a number
43 of other state police officers, including supervising officers,
44 managers, and policymaking employees for the state police.
45 Those defendants are not named in the filing.

46 “We do not comment on pending litigation,” Adam
47 Silverman, a spokesperson for the Vermont State Police, wrote in
48 an email when asked about the suit.

49 **Family: force was ‘excessive** 50 **and objectively unreasonable’**

51 Details released by the attorney general’s office June 23
52 shed light on the events that transpired the day troopers shot and
53 killed Garvey.

54 Police were told that Garvey had a history of
55 schizophrenia. Officers and a mental health clinician spoke to
56 Garvey through his door, and Garvey declined to let officers into
57 his house. At one point during their conversation, Garvey
58 indicated he had a firearm.

59 After more than four hours at the scene, police were
60 granted a warrant to enter. They were also granted a warrant to
61 have Garvey evaluated for involuntary mental health treatment.

62 Upon entering, officers encountered a barricade and saw
63 that Garvey was holding an object. Trooper Romeo told a
64 sergeant multiple times that he did not know what Garvey was
65 holding and ordered him to drop it.

66 When Garvey raised the object and pointed it toward
67 officers, Romeo fired seven shots and hit the man three times.

68 The Garvey family alleges Romeo’s use of deadly force
69 “was excessive and objectively unreasonable under the totality of
70 the circumstances,” the lawsuit states. The family also alleges that
71 officers disregarded Garvey’s medical needs and failed to provide
72 him timely treatment, causing him greater harm.

73 Forty-nine people have been shot by state police in
74 Vermont since 1977, when the state began keeping track. No
75 state police officers has ever been criminally prosecuted for their
76 use of force, according to Vermont State Police data.

77 “We are not asking Vermont to pretend every police
78 shooting is unlawful,” Shawn Garvey said in his June 29

79 statement. "We are asking the Vermont State Police to stop
80 pretending every police shooting is unavoidable. Those are not
81 the same thing."

####END TEXT####

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