

# In Our Opinion - Bassler report impressive

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We were very impressed this week with the report issued by Mendocino County District Attorney David Eyster on the shooting of fugitive Aaron Bassler last September near Fort Bragg.

The report found the Sacramento County Sheriff's SWAT Team members fully justified in shooting Bassler when they saw him emerge from the woods. We agree with that conclusion and Eyster's basic reasoning: that Bassler was armed and dangerous, had already tried to shoot other law enforcement officers, and that the whole situation was tense and escalating.

What was particularly remarkable about Eyster's report was the level of detail it contained. Of course, had Bassler been caught and put on trial little of that information would likely have been included while the wheels of justice ground along. But even without those limitations, Eyster saw fit to give the public an unusually clear recital of all the facts of the case. Also, his own brief comments scattered through the document on the tragedy of the deaths, the timing of certain events, Bassler's family dynamic and his opinion of the Laura's Law implications gave important perspective on the information presented.

The report has riveted the community and, for once, has not raised more questions than it answered.

We learned a great deal about Bassler's habits and activities and his apparent expertise in maneuvering around law enforcement. We got a chilling look straight into the tragic moment when Ian Chaney had to run for his life while Jere Melo lay dead. We got a picture of how and when law enforcement engaged Bassler and the real danger he presented to them throughout the weeks of chasing him through the woods around Fort Bragg.

While he didn't need to present this much detail for most reasonable people to agree that the SWAT Team members acted appropriately, Eyster made the effort anyway. His report is a terrific example of the best kind of service to the cause of public information.