

Police refuse to release video after Dayton-area killing

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Nearly two weeks after the police shot and killed a 22-year-old man holding a toy gun in a suburban Dayton Walmart store, government and store officials are still refusing to release surveillance tapes and other evidence related to the murder.

John Crawford III was shot and killed by Beavercreek police on Tuesday, August 5, while he shopped in the Walmart store for groceries to make 'smores. He had two young sons, one-year-old John Crawford IV and four-month-old Jayden Crawford.

Crawford's family held a press conference this August 11 to refute claims by police of justifiable homicide and demand that the videotapes and other evidence be made public.

There was a second victim of the police confrontation. Angela Williams, a 37-year-old nurse, ran from the store with her 9-year-old daughter after police stormed in. She collapsed and later died. Williams was to be married the following Saturday.

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine says that Crawford was shot while carrying a toy gun that fires BB pellets. Crawford had picked the gun up off the sporting goods shelf where Walmart displays it. The gun is manufactured by Crosman and is classified as a "variable pump air rifle."

Police said that Crawford was waving what appeared to be an assault rifle and was shot after he refused to drop it when ordered to by police. Media reports have repeated the police claim along with reports that callers to 911 say that Crawford had pointed the gun at children.

But both the police, the attorney general's office and Walmart are all refusing to release the store surveillance tapes and in three 911 tapes of calls that are circulating on the internet the caller makes no mention of him pointing the gun at children.

In a press conference held on Monday, August 11, family members and supporters rejected the police claim that this was a "justifiable homicide," pointing out that if the video supported the police claim it would have been made public by now.

"There's no doubt in my mind that once we receive everything in its entirety, the evidence, i.e. everything else that's out there, that he will be vindicated," John Crawford Jr. said. "My son was not a monster."

LeeCee Johnson, the mother of Crawford's children, told the *Dayton Daily News* she was on a call with Crawford when he was shot by the police.

"We was just talking. He said he was at the video games playing videos and he went over there by the toy section where the toy guns were. And the next thing I know, he said 'It's not real,' and the police start shooting and they said 'Get on the ground,' but he was already on the ground because they had shot him," she said, adding: "And I could hear him just crying and screaming. I feel like they shot him down like he was not even human."

Bobbie Odneal, a good friend of John Crawford for seven years, told the *Dayton Daily News* he saw his friend just hours before he died on Tuesday.

"That's my best friend. He was just literally at my house ... the only thing I have of him is his hoodie. I just gave him his ID, and I'm waking up hearing he's dead," Odneal told the paper.

Odoneal also said he wants to see the video. He says that he cannot believe that his friend would get into a confrontation with police and believes that the police are trying to cover this up.

"This is unreal, why they ain't showing this video. I just want someone to back this up," Odneal said.

The gun is designed and painted to look like a real rifle, and neither national nor state law requires

manufacturers to mark or paint the guns to clearly label them as toys. Many other states require such guns to have bright orange tips, for instance.

Crawford's killing is one of a growing number of police murders in the United States.

Beavercreek, a suburb of Dayton, Ohio is predominantly white and slightly above average in terms of employment and income levels, although by no means wealthy.

Unemployment remains high and many have given up looking for work or are working at part-time jobs. A Costco store, which is under construction in nearby Centerville, has already received job applications from over 7,000 people in its first week, for just 138 jobs.



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