

Cleveland police defend shooting death of 12-year-old boy

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26 November 2014

The Cleveland police department is defending the murder of a 12-year-old boy who was shot and killed over the weekend while playing with a toy gun in a city park.

In a press conference held Tuesday morning, Cleveland Police Chief Calvin Williams defended the actions of an as yet unidentified Cleveland police officer who shot 12-year-old Tamir Rice Saturday afternoon as he played with his sister and a friend in a park playground. Tamir died Sunday morning from the shooting.

Williams repeated the standard claim made by police after such killings that officers feared for their lives and had to make a decision in an instant.

“Our officers at times are required to make critical decisions in a split second, unfortunately this was one of those times,” he said.

Williams went further, placing the blame on the child and his family. He said there is a need to “teach our children and our community about the danger of weapons, mainly handguns, whether they be real or fake. Guns are not toys, we need to teach our kids that. Our community needs to understand, guns are not toys.”

The police assertion that they had no way of knowing whether the gun was real or not is a bald-face lie. A caller to 911 told the dispatcher that the gun was “probably fake” and that the child was sitting on the swings. To make certain not to be misunderstood, the caller repeated once again that the person was a child and that the gun was not likely real.

At no time during the call, which lasted over two minutes, did the caller, who said that he was sitting in the same park, seem concerned for his own safety.

In justifying the killing, police claim that the officers were not relayed this information by the dispatcher.

They say that when they arrived at the playground they told Tamir to raise his hands. He instead pulled out the “gun,” they claim. At this point one of the officers fired twice at the child, supposedly in self defense.

The police have already poked holes in their own version of events. In response to questions by reporters, Deputy Chief Edward Tomba, who joined Williams at the press conference, revealed that neither he nor Chief Williams had even reviewed the call from the dispatcher to the officers that responded to the call.

“We don’t know exactly what was relayed, I have not reviewed it, we have not reviewed it,” he admitted.

They also confessed that they had not yet bothered to take a full statement from the officers involved in the shooting, fully three days after the killing. If both of these statements are true, it can only mean that the police are conducting a disinformation campaign aimed at covering up the murder of a 12-year-old.

At no point has anyone, including the police, stated that the child pointed the gun at police or made any threatening statements or actions.

Police claim to have a video of the shooting that was taken by the security camera posted on the side of the nearby recreation center, which they claim will support their version of events. They have not released the video.

There has been an outpouring of support for Tamir’s family from neighbors, friends and people in the community who condemn his killing.

“Who would’ve thought he would go so soon?” Gregory Henderson, identified as a close friend of Tamir’s family, told WKYC-TV. “To be 12 years old, he doesn’t know what he’s doing. Police, they know what they’re doing.”

Area residents also question why police could not have repeated instructions when they did realize they

were dealing with a child, why they didn't use non-lethal force, and why they could not recognize a toy gun, when the 911 caller clearly did.

The killing of Tamir occurred as Cleveland and other cities were awaiting the grand jury decision in the case of Michael Brown, the 18-year-old gunned down by police in Ferguson, Missouri, in August. The grand jury has since ruled that there will be no charges brought against Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson for the murder of Brown.

The Obama administration had instructed Cleveland and every major city to place their police departments on alert, and, using the language of the "war on terror," to expect extremists to carry out attacks. It is possible that the tensions created by the such rhetoric contributed to Tamir's killing.

The police murder of Tamir is part of a growing wave of police violence directed at the working class and the most oppressed sections of the population. Tamir's killing came just days after the police killing of Akai Gurley in Brooklyn, New York, while he was walking down the stairs in his apartment building with his girlfriend.

Since Tamir's shooting, there have been at least four other police shootings, according to an unofficial tally kept on Wikipedia. There is no official record of people killed by law enforcement officers.

On November 22, Curtis Wade Holley, 52, an apparent mentally disturbed man in Tallahassee, Florida, set fire to his house and then shot and killed a policeman as officers arrived on the scene. He was killed as police returned fire.

On the same day, 18-year-old Carey Smith-Viramontes was shot and killed at a home in Long Beach, California. Police say they came to the house on reports that a girl that they were looking for was inside.

On November 23, police in Bradenton, Florida, shot and killed Donald Wendt, 50, at his home. Wendt was an Iraq War Veteran and Bradenton firefighter. Neighbors called 911 when Wendt threatened to kill himself and his sister. Wendt was shot by police when he came out of his home holding two guns, and, according to police, pointed one at an officer.

On November 24, Leonardo Marquette Little, 33, was killed by Jacksonville, Florida, police during a traffic stop. Police claim that they shot Little when he violently resisted arrest.



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