

Cleveland police seek to justify shooting death of 12-year-old boy

Samuel Davidson
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From the moment 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot, the Cleveland Police Department and the media began a cover-up of the murder, seeking to present it as a “tragic death,” while placing responsibility on the boy’s parents and family.

Tamir was shot by a Cleveland police officer while he was playing in a park on Saturday, November 22. He died the next day from his wounds.

What has become the official version of events is that police responded to a call that someone was pulling a gun and threatening people in the park. Police were not told that the 911 caller thought the gun was a fake. When they arrived, Tamir supposedly reached for the gun, and police had no choice but to shoot him. The main lesson, it is claimed, is that children should not play with guns.

Just about everything in this story is a lie manufactured to justify another state-sponsored killing in the United States.

Some of the first statements made public by police came from Cleveland Police Patrolman’s Association president Jeff Follmer. He claimed that officers had instructed Tamir to raise his hands and only shot when the youth instead reached for the gun. Follmer said the officers were never told the caller thought the gun was a fake. “We have to assume every gun is real,” he said. “When we don’t, that’s the day we don’t go home.”

Follmer’s version of the events was repeated by Cleveland Police Chief Calvin Williams at a press conference held on November 24. “Our officers at times are required to make critical decisions in a split second,” Williams said. “Unfortunately this is one of those times.”

Williams further said that a video taken of the shooting was “very clear” and would verify the police account of events.

This version of events has been repeated throughout the media, especially in the first days after the shooting, in a deliberate campaign to shape public opinion.

The police story relies on three major claims: First, that police thought the gun was real; second, that Tamir posed a threat to people in the community; and third, that Tamir reached for the gun when confronted, and police had to react.

It has now been two weeks since the shooting, and many details of the killing are still being kept from the public. This includes the tapes of the calls between dispatchers and police, as well as interviews with the officers who carried out the shooting.

However, the information that has been made public— low resolution video of the shooting taken by a security camera on a nearby light pole and the tape of the call to 911—exposes the official account of events.

First, the 911 caller clearly did not believe the gun to be real. The video shows that the caller was sitting at most 20 feet from where Tamir was playing with the gun. Three times the caller told 911 that he did not think the gun was real and described Tamir as a juvenile who was also playing on swings.

The caller seems to be more worried about the police arriving and decides to leave before they do.

Even if this information was not relayed to the officers and they thought that were dealing with a real gun, the video shows that the police car pulled up within a few feet of Tamir. The direction from which they arrived meant that they could have stopped much further away and ordered the youth to put the toy down.

Second, the video clearly shows that Tamir was not a threat to the public. For the five or so minutes before being shot, in addition to Tamir playing with the toy gun, he is seen making and throwing snowballs, talking on his cell phone, sitting and resting his head on the

picnic table. Only two other people are seen in the park: the person who called 911 and another person who walked next to Tamir along the sidewalk for about 20 yards. Neither person acted frightened by Tamir's playing nor thought the gun was real.

When police arrived, there was no one else around in the park.

Third, and most importantly, Tamir was never a threat to the police. The video shows that Tamir was shot within 1 and a half to 2 seconds of the police arriving. Officer Loehmann appears to have shot the child while he was exiting the car, even before it stopped moving. Police have not attempted to explain how he could have given the child instructions to put his hands up, and how the child could have had time to respond.

In the seconds and minutes after the shooting, police made no efforts to give Tamir first aid. Instead they continued to train their guns on the youth as he laid face down in the mud. First aid was only given four minutes later, when an FBI agent who was working on another case arrived.

The shooting of Tamir comes at a time when police are being given the green light to murder with impunity. Since Tamir's death, prosecutors in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City have manipulated grand juries to ensure that there would be no prosecution of police for the killing of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

In its attempt to manipulate the facts behind the killing of Tamir, police are seeking to ensure a similar outcome in Cleveland.



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