

Orlando, Florida police sergeant shoots unarmed man

Matthew MacEgan
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In Florida on the morning of Monday, December 8, Sergeant Robert McCarthy, an Orange County police deputy responding to a report of a stolen car in West Orlando, shot and injured alleged perpetrator Cedric Bartee, a 28-year-old African American. Bartee, who was unarmed, was subsequently taken to Orlando Regional Medical Center where he underwent surgery and remained in critical condition as of Monday afternoon.

McCarthy justified the shooting by claiming that Bartee made “extensive furtive movements,” but several witnesses have reported that Bartee had his hands up in the air when he was shot.

Later on Monday, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings held a press conference where he asked his community to be patient while his department investigated the shooting. Demings, an African American, appeared flanked by a group of pastors and other leaders from the African American community. He also asked that the public trust that the investigative process will find the “truth.”

McCarthy is a seven-year veteran with the sheriff’s office and has never been involved in a shooting before. He has been placed on administrative leave for at least one week while the investigation proceeds.

According to a spokesman for the office, McCarthy felt threatened by Bartee, who was behind the wheel of the car and kept moving his hands out of view and then tried to get away even though his car was blocked by police vehicles. McCarthy therefore felt “forced” to fire upon Bartee, who was struck by one bullet. Bartee’s passenger and alleged accomplice, Henry Chaney, also 28 years old, was arrested but was not injured. No weapons were found inside the stolen vehicle.

This transpired after police had initially found the vehicle, a Honda Civic, which was empty. Somehow,

Bartee and Chaney got into the stolen car as the deputies were setting up a perimeter around the vehicle, which prompted the deputies to block the front and back of the stolen vehicle with their own vehicles before confronting the young men. The police reported that the deputies then gave commands, and McCarthy fired when Bartee would not stop moving.

Witnesses, however, report that Bartee’s hands were up in the air when three bullets were fired at him by Sgt. McCarthy. Natasha Hall, a nearby resident, stated in a media interview that “his hands went down after the first shot.”

Another resident, Ernest Miles, reported that he looked out of his front window after he heard the officers shouting, “Put your hands up! Put your hands up!” He then witnessed McCarthy fire his gun through the windshield at Bartee, who was in the driver’s seat. Miles told reporters that “their hands were already up. There was no tint in the car, so you could see in the car.”

Acknowledging the recent upheavals involving police brutality around the country in recent months, Demings stated, “I am very sensitive to some of the events that have occurred around the nation in recent times. I want to ensure that we have transparency as well as accountability for the actions of all of my staff that’s involved.”

The shooting of Bartee comes only a few days after an Orlando detective shot and killed 32-year-old Alejandro Noel Cordero during the investigation of a burglary. In August, a woman was killed by a stray bullet during an officer-involved shooting. Maria Godinez, 22-years-old, later died at Orlando Regional Medical Center.



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