

Protests continue as Baltimore police conclude investigation into death of Freddie Gray

Tom Eley
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On Thursday the Baltimore Police Department completed an internal investigation into the killing of Freddie Gray, 25, whose brutal arrest on the morning of April 12 was followed by a roughly 40-minute van ride, at the end of which Gray was found in critical condition. He fell into a coma and died one week later, a result of complications from a severely broken neck. Protests in Baltimore and other cities throughout the US continued Thursday.

The police report, delivered to State Attorney Marilyn Mosby, has not been made available to the public. However, according to Deputy Commissioner Kevin Davis, it reveals that the van carrying Gray made a fourth, previously undisclosed stop, for which there exists video footage taken “by a privately owned camera.”

At a Thursday news conference, Police Commissioner Anthony Batts refused to answer questions from the media about the report or about what is captured by the video footage.

The revelation of the fourth stop, which took place at what one media report described as “a desolate intersection... surrounded by vacant lots” less than a mile from the spot of Gray’s arrest, contradicts the previous statements of five police officers involved in the killing. A sixth police officer, evidently the van driver, has refused to cooperate with the investigation.

According to the previous official timeline, the van made three stops. At the first, Gray was removed and placed in leg shackles. The van stopped a second time to “deal with Mr. Gray,” though what this ominous statement means has not been explained. At a third stop another prisoner was picked up and Gray was found unresponsive, after which he was finally taken for medical treatment. The previously undisclosed stop took place *before* the others.

Later on Thursday, grocery store owner Jung Hyun Hwang confirmed to the Associated Press that the security camera was his and that police officers had made a copy last week. The only other copy of the video was stolen, allegedly by looters, on Monday night. Even though Hwang gave police the video last week, the official version of events remained unchanged until today.

Other evidence of what happened during Gray’s time in the police van is also being withheld, including radio reports of the van’s location.

“What I would like to know and what we have been asking for from the beginning are the radio runs that are recorded during these stops,” said Andrew O’Connell, one of the Gray family’s attorneys. “Whenever a police officer makes a stop he’s supposed to radio it in. We haven’t seen those. Those are usually the best way to get an accurate picture of what happened during an arrest.”

Witnesses to the police brutalization of Gray before his removal in the police van say that he was run down from behind by officers after “making eye contact.” Two of these officers drove their knees into Gray’s back while applying handcuffs. Police contorted the young man’s body “like origami,” while the youth pleaded that he was hurt. He was then shoved into a cage in the back of the police van. Police have admitted that he was not restrained by a safety belt, as is required by official policy.

Video footage taken by a witness to his arrest shows that, at this time, Gray was conscious but hurt. He can be heard pleading for help as he is placed in the van. When the van arrived at the police precinct, Gray was unconscious and in critical condition. His spinal column was 80 percent severed at the neck and his voice box crushed.

A *Washington Post* report released late Wednesday night claimed that Gray somehow inflicted these horrific injuries on himself while being transported in the back of the police van.

Written by Peter Hermann, the *Post* story bears the trappings of police misinformation. The affidavit that serves as the basis for the report was written by an unnamed police investigator and handed to the *Post* by another anonymous police source. The affidavit was allegedly based on the testimony gathered from the prisoner picked up at the van's final stop prior to the hospital. When the *Post* story appeared, this prisoner, too, was anonymous. In other words, nothing in Hermann's "news story" could be verified at all.

The *Post*'s attempt to blame Gray for his own death unraveled by Thursday evening after the other prisoner in the van came forward. Twenty-two-year-old Donte Allen told NBC News, "[a]ll I heard was a little banging for like four seconds. I just heard a little banging" and nothing to indicate that Gray "was intentionally trying to injure himself," as the *Post* story alleged. A police autopsy, according to local news affiliate WBAL, also "showed no evidence that Gray hit his head against anything on his own, and that his neck and spinal injuries were similar to those suffered by people in car accidents."

By the time Allen was loaded, Gray was already unresponsive, sources told NBC. A closed circuit video of the stop, taken from a nearby building, clearly shows officers looking in at him in his cage. If the *Post*'s implausible account is true, Gray would have had to revive himself and then severely break his own neck in the few minutes between the van's final stop and arrival at the hospital.

Another anonymous police source who spoke with the Baltimore ABC news affiliate WJLA claims that Gray's neck was broken during his police transport, and that an injury to his head matches a bolt in the van. Meanwhile, an anonymous "relative" of the police van driver has told CNN that the driver believes Gray was injured before his transport.

State Attorney Marilyn Mosby will now assume responsibility over the investigation. She quickly joined other officials in indicating that charges will not soon be brought against the six police officers involved in Gray's murder, all of whom remain on paid leave.

"While we have and will continue to leverage the

information received by the department, we are not relying solely on their findings, but rather the facts that we have gathered and verified," said state prosecutor Mosby. "We ask for the public to remain patient and peaceful and to trust the process of the justice system"—the same justice system that has left uncharged the police killers of Michael Brown and virtually every other killer cop in the US.

Mosby is a law-and-order politician. In a campaign commercial prior to her recent election, Mosby, who is African-American, boasted that she comes from a family of police officers. In a campaign speech, she declared that "in spite of what we all might want to think, the police in our city are doing their jobs." Mosby is married to black politician, Nick Mosby, who represents parts of West Baltimore on the City Council.

Curfews continue to be imposed night after night in Baltimore after the social explosion in the wake of Gray's funeral that took place on Monday. On Thursday afternoon, a "unity rally" was held near where Gray was arrested. In the evening, hundreds of protesters marched prior to the curfew.

Thousands of militarized police and National Guard, many of them fresh from tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, are deployed on the streets of Baltimore, which is only 40 miles from Washington, DC. Since Monday, upwards of 300 people have been arrested.



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