

Notes on police violence in America

DOJ rules out charges against Minneapolis police officers who killed Jamar Clark

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The Department of Justice announced Wednesday that it would not press federal civil rights charges against two Minneapolis police officers involved in the shooting death of 24-year-old Jamar Clark last November.

The Obama administration, which has funneled millions of dollars of military grade equipment and armored vehicles to local police departments, has repeatedly declined to bring federal charges against killer cops.

Following the killing of Clark last year, protests against police violence erupted throughout Minneapolis. Police responded by deploying paramilitary units to viciously break up demonstrations.

The decision by federal officials not to bring charges over Clark's killing comes after county prosecutors in Minneapolis announced in March they would not file state criminal charges against the two officers.

US Attorney Andrew Luger announced Wednesday that an independent federal investigation had "found insufficient evidence to support federal criminal civil rights charges" against Minneapolis police officers Mark Ringgenberg and Dustin Schwarze. Both officers have been on desk duty since the killing.

According to police officials, Ringgenberg and Schwarze were responding to a call on November 15, 2015 of a man interfering with paramedics in a north Minneapolis neighborhood. Upon their arrival they confronted Clark who, they claimed, continued to interfere with the paramedics. As officers approached Clark, what they described as a "struggle" ensued leading to Clark being shot in the back of the head as he was pinned down on the ground. He would die later in a hospital after his family decided to remove him

from life support.

Federal prosecutors placed great emphasis on whether or not Clark was in fact handcuffed when shot. If he was not handcuffed, then a case could be made for the officers that they were acting in self-defense. However, if he was handcuffed, then the officers had no reason to shoot Clark, in the execution style they did, as he was restrained and posed no real danger.

While police officials have admitted that Clark was unarmed at the time of the shooting, they have repeatedly disputed the claim that he was handcuffed. However, according to multiple witnesses present at the time of the shooting, the young unarmed black man was handcuffed and not resisting when shot.

Luger stated, "Given the lack of bruising, the lack of Mr. Clark's DNA on the handcuffs, and the deeply conflicted testimony about whether he was handcuffed, we determined that we could not pursue this case based on a prosecution theory that Mr. Clark was handcuffed at the time that he was shot. And, in fact, we reached the conclusion, based on all of the evidence that we reviewed, that the evidence suggested that Mr. Clark was not, in fact, handcuffed when he was shot."

He further added, "Our second area of focus was what happened when Mr. Clark and the two officers were on the ground. We wanted to know whether the available evidence would support a finding beyond a reasonable doubt that the officers acted in a manner that was objectively unreasonable, even if Mr. Clark was not handcuffed."

As both officers have not been charged, they therefore did not act, according to federal prosecutors, in a manner that was "objectively unreasonable." In other words, regardless of whether he was handcuffed

or not, the officers had every right to shoot Clark in the back of the head as he lay pinned down on the ground.

Ringgenberg and Schwarze join the ever growing list of murderous cops who have avoided criminal charges or conviction. Accompanying them will be: Edward M. Nero in the killing of Freddie Gray; Richard Haste in the killing of Ramarley Graham; Darren Wilson in the killing of Michael Brown and Daniel Pantaleo in the killing of Eric Garner.



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