

Newly released bodycam footage shows Jacksonville, Florida police murder of Kevin Mahan

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The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office released bodycam footage this month of a fatal police shooting which took place in April. The footage plainly shows the officer open fire and kill a man who was standing far away from him and posed no immediate threat.

Initial reports of the shooting indicated that the police had been called to Morse Avenue, on Jacksonville, Florida's west side, early that morning in response to a 911 call "regarding a mentally ill individual." The *Florida Times Union* reported at the time that "family members" had contacted police and told them that the man had cut power to their home and had "mental health issues."

Officers did not locate the suspect at that time but returned later that morning, after further 911 calls reported a man in the area vandalizing homes.

When they located Kevin Mahan, a 43-year-old white man, he was walking through a wooded area holding a small hatchet. As the two officers on the bodycam video locate him, one shouts "put the ax down" several times, as Mahan can be seen calmly turning to face the officer, at a distance of at least twenty feet or more. Mahan can be heard to say "no" and then, "listen man" as the two officers hold him at gunpoint. As the officers continued shouting at him, he raised his hand, holding the hatchet as if to make a point, and again was heard to say "listen, man" at which point the lead officer shot him in the head and killed him.

Mahan was not advancing towards the officers, and his demeanor could hardly be said to be menacing. The "hatchet" he was reported to be brandishing appeared to be less than a foot long, roughly the size of a tool used in landscaping. The encounter unfolded over less than a minute.

The officer who killed Mahan was not charged or disciplined for the incident and is still on the job. His name has also not been released due to the fact that the Sheriff's office invoked "Marsy's Law," a state constitutional amendment passed in 2018, intended to shield the victims of crimes from harassment, which is now routinely used by Florida law enforcement agencies to shield killer officers from public scrutiny.

In a statement to media outlets in the aftermath of the killing, Sheriff T.K. Waters gave an account of the incident that closely matched what was seen on the bodycam footage.

"They announced three more times; 'Put the axe down,'" Waters said. "At that point, within distance of the subject, he raised the axe and the officer fired one shot, striking the subject and killing him at the scene."

Waters surely knew that bodycam footage would eventually be released, and in his statement he attempted to exonerate the officer without blatantly lying. Essentially, the Sheriff justified Mahan's shooting not because he posed a deadly threat, but because he did not immediately comply with the police officer's commands.

Mahan is one of twelve people shot by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office so far in 2022. Among that number, eight were killed.

Since the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office posted the video of the killing on its YouTube page ten days ago it has been viewed over 37,000 times, and most posted comments condemn the shooting as murder.

Commenter Rich C posted "Shoutout to JAXsheriff for being transparent. They posted a video of them clearly murdering someone. That takes guts!"

Another commenter added, "They are in an empty

wooded area, where there was distance to be utilized and no imminent threat. No attempt at de-escalation, just straight to service weapon to the face. Listen to the tone of his radio call out, 'shots fired.' That officer was quite pleased with himself, indeed.”

A third commenter summarized, “This is a snuff tape”



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