

Washington D.C. law enforcement releases videos showing police killing of 17-year old in a moving vehicle

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The US Park Police (USPP) and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) of Washington D.C. have each released video footage of police killing of 17-year-old Dalaneo Martin in Northeast D.C. on March 18.

The footage, released Tuesday as separate videos from USPP and MPD, was drawn from six different responding officers' body mounted cameras. Both USPP and MPD released the raw camera footage from each officer's vantage point, along with an edited compilation version from cameras worn by each department's respective officers.

Neither department has released the names of the officers involved in the incident. Martin's family, represented by attorney Andrew Clarke, wants the names of the officers made public and for them to be fired and prosecuted for misconduct.

On the morning of March 18, USPP and MPD officers responded to a report about an alleged stolen vehicle. An MPD officer found a white vehicle parked with Martin inside, "asleep," according to a statement from the Park Police and called for backup. The vehicle's "ignition was punched," the statement continued.

Upon arriving in the River Terrace neighborhood, near the Anacostia River, officers from MPD and USPP can be seen in the body camera footage discussing how to approach the situation so as to avoid a police chase. MPD policy forbids officers from blocking a car's path during a pursuit, to help minimize collateral damage to nearby property.

In the body cam footage from the Park Police, officers can be heard discussing tactics such as breaking the car windows and pulling Martin out of the vehicle. One officer said, "Once you break it, he's

gonna wake up, start it, and put it in drive to go. We don't want nobody to get hurt."

One of the MPD officers chimed in, "He's knocked out. The back window is just a plastic. I'm going to try to cut that out quietly, unlock the door. If he doesn't get startled, doesn't wake up then we're going to try to get in there, grab him before he puts that car in gear." The officer added, "If he does take off, just let him go."

In addition to being trained not to block in vehicles during a pursuit, D.C. police are also trained not to enter vehicles. But that is not what happened.

Instead, officers from both agencies approached the vehicle. Martin was sleeping in the driver's seat. One of the MPD officers opened a door on the passenger side of the vehicle. Two Park Police officers hopped in the back seat on both sides shouting, "Police, don't move! Don't move! Don't move!" At the same time, they started choking Martin from behind.

Martin awoke to the officers strangling him while trying to pull him out of the vehicle. Panicked, he drove off. One of the Park Police officers, on Martin's side of the car, fell out onto the roadway. The other officer, in the rear passenger-side seat, screamed, "Stop! Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Then, the officer fired multiple rounds of his gun at Martin at what amounted to point blank range. The vehicle stopped after crashing into a building. A medical examiner found six of the officers' shots hit Martin. The teen died instantly at the scene.

Police used the discovery of a gun inside the vehicle to malign Martin's character and intent in the wake of the incident. Investigation officials, however, revealed they do not know the circumstances surrounding the

weapon, such as whether it belonged to Martin or had been in the car without his knowledge.

On Wednesday, Martin's family held a press conference in which his mother, Terra Martin, repeated her calls for the names of the officers involved to be made public, and for them to be charged with first-degree murder.

Martin said, "This pain hurts so bad. I just want justice for my son. And I need the officer to be locked up, all of them that played a role." She continued by saying the video "of my son being murdered" has left her with a profound grief that has left her unable to eat or sleep.

"I'm lost," she said. "The video self-explains everything that they did to my son. And how can you justify this?"

Dalaneo, known affectionately as "Debo," was a loving father to his now seven-month-old son, according to family. One of nine siblings, Martin had been planning to take his son and nephews to a local park on the day he was killed. The family has held protests in the days after Martin was killed demanding charges be filed against the police responsible.

Although it is MPD policy to release body camera footage in cases involving "excessive force," the Park Police do not share those protocols. The release of the footage weeks after Martin's death followed public outcry demanding an explanation for how he died.

Clark, the family attorney, said the family's investigation at the time in late March, before body camera footage had been released, indicated Martin had been choked and shot multiple times.

Martin's sister, Rahketa Steele, said at a recent march and rally, "No matter what the circumstances is, no matter what you found or what you think you found, my brother deserves to be here. He's 17."

In the wake of the release of the police video this week, reactions on social media expressed outrage at the behavior of the officers. On Twitter, one user asked in disgust, "How do 4 cops not manage to take a sleeping person into custody without killing him?"

Another Twitter user wrote, "Dalaneo Martin didn't even have time to respond to the demand before the officer plugged his back with bullets...Not to mention the video looks like the police broke into his car while he slept to set up the ambush for his murder. Even if the car was stolen, he had to die?"

For their parts, the two police agencies under scrutiny have defended the actions of the unidentified officers. On Thursday, two days after the release of the body camera footage, the Executive Board of the US Park Police Fraternal Order of Police released a statement saying, "Our officers' actions are justified based on well-established case law, USPP policies, and training."

The chair of the Park Police Fraternal Order of Police, Kenneth Spencer, told the Washington Post on the day of the release of the police video, "There is a lawful reason for him [the Park Police officer who shot Martin] to be in the car, the use of force was justified, and the union stands behind the actions the officers took."

The MPD Force Investigations Team is leading an investigation to determine what happened, with a review by the US Attorney's Office for D.C. The Interior Department is conducting a review of the Park Police actions in the incident.

This week, the FBI and US Attorney's Office opened a civil rights investigation into the events leading to Martin's death. That investigation is ongoing, coming amid the latest wave of scrutiny over police use of force in the wake of the killings of people such as Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee; Alonzo Bagley in Shreveport, Louisiana; and Timothy Johnson in Tysons, Virginia. The latter was shot and killed after being suspected of stealing sunglasses from a shopping mall.



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