

Surveillance camera exposes police lies in Philadelphia killing

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A recently released neighborhood surveillance video has exposed as a pack of lies the Philadelphia Police Department's claims surrounding the killing of Eddie Irizarry, 27, on August 14.

Officer Mike Dial shot Irizarry six times as the victim sat in his car on East Willard Street in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood. Irizarry was pronounced dead hours later at Temple University Hospital.

Police initially claimed that Irizarry got out of his car and lunged at them with a knife after being pulled over for reckless driving.

Instead, the footage shows that Irizarry made no move against police, nor was he even outside of his vehicle during the incident. The shooting took place a mere five seconds after officers stepped out of their vehicle. Irizarry did not even have time to roll down his window to speak to the officers, who approached the young man after he drove down a one-way street in the wrong direction.

The surveillance footage shows what can only be called murder. Irizarry pulls over on a narrow side street, and moments later a police car pulls up behind him. Two officers step out of the vehicle, with one, Mark Dial, drawing his gun. Dial immediately walks towards Irizarry's driver side window, which is rolled up, and opens fire at close range. He shoots Irizarry, who has not moved, six times. After a few moments, the officers drag Irizarry from his car and place him in their cruiser.

Irizarry was pronounced dead at 12:48 p.m. at Temple University Hospital.

In light of the footage, the Philadelphia Police Department has amended its initial story, claiming a reporting error. It dropped the claim that Irizarry lunged at police, and has now indicated it will dismiss Dial after a mandatory 30-day suspension.

Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw spoke in defensive terms about the department's change of position.

"We have nothing to hide here," Outlaw told a news conference. "We make mistakes. We did say out there on the scene that this was preliminary information. Unfortunately, the information that was released has pretty dire consequences in establishing and framing a narrative that quite frankly was not true."

Irizarry's family attorney, Shaka Johnson, rejected these claims. "That was not a mislead, that is a blatant lie, and an attempt to sort of mislead an investigation, and quite frankly, to corrupt the court of public opinion," he said.

The exposure reveals a basic truth about the American police. In almost every case where police kill a civilian, the authorities claim that the victim attempted to attack the police, or that he or she carried a weapon. On the basis of such claims, police are not only exonerated for murders they have committed. They are seldom even investigated. With increasing frequency, however, video evidence exposes police lies.

The neighborhood surveillance footage came to light only because of the work of the family. Johnson, the family attorney, said that he was denied access to police body cam footage by the District Attorney's Office. Family members then went to the neighborhood where Irizarry was shot and consulted the neighbors, one of whom provided the video. The family decided that it needed to be made public.

Irizarry was originally from Puerto Rico and was working as a mechanic prior to the shooting. He spoke little English, creating an even more confusing situation for him as the officers shouted at him in the few seconds prior to opening fire.

Family members said they were extremely skeptical of the narrative the police initially presented. They said Irizarry was not a violent man nor was he troubled in any way. His aunt, Zoraida Garcia, said he was a “good kid.” Irizarry also didn't have any criminal record prior to the encounter. Although family members say Irizarry had schizophrenia, the condition was being treated.

The Fraternal Order of Police, an organization dedicated to the protection of crooked and ruthless police officers, gave its backing to Dial. Fortunato Perri, a lawyer for the organization, said that Dial “has the full support of the Fraternal Order of Police as we continue to review the facts and circumstances surrounding this tragic incident.”

Irizarry's death is another reminder of the brutality of the police, an instrument of the state for class suppression and protection of private property. So far in 2023, 725 people have been killed by cops. Only a handful of days have passed since the beginning of the year in which no deaths have been reported at the hands of the police.

Although minorities are killed at a disproportionate rate, whites still comprise the largest single racial group of those killed by the police each year. Such basic facts show that while racism is certainly present, police violence and brutality are not solely based upon race.

The defense of private property by the police means the enforcement of social inequality. This essence of the work of the police attracts and cultivates within their ranks the backward elements, fascists, racists and the like, to combat the working class.

The overwhelming majority of police victims, like Irizarry, are workers.



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