

Police release body cam footage of shooting death of 15-year-old in Akron, Ohio

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On Thursday, Akron, Ohio officials released bodycam and dashcam videos showing a police officer opening fire on 15-year-old Jazmir Tucker with a long-arm and then, along with six other officers, waiting ten minutes to provide aid to the teen. Tucker died shortly after he was taken to a local hospital by paramedics.

From the way the videos have been edited, it is clear that Akron authorities are doing everything possible to present the police gunning down of a ninth grade student at North High School as justified.

On the day of the shooting, which took place at 10:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving, police said they heard gunshots in the area and encountered Tucker in the yard of South High School. The reports said he was “carrying a loaded gun.”

The reports also said that the officer who fired the shots that killed the teen had been on the force for five years. The second officer, who did not fire his weapon, has been with the Akron police for four years. Both officers, who have not been named, have been placed on paid administrative leave.

In one eight-minute bodycam video, an officer is seen running with his automatic rifle drawn. He stops and then fires multiple rounds. There is no audio for the first 30 seconds and once the audio begins, the officer is heard yelling “put your hands out to your side,” and other officers at the scene are yelling “stop moving,” and “put your hands up.”

The police officers repeat these commands more than 30 times with their guns drawn and aimed at the teenager who is down on the ground suffering from multiple gunshots.

Another video shows the group of seven or eight officers walking up to Tucker and handcuffing him while he is on the ground and not moving. The officers can be seen pulling a handgun out of the teen’s jacket

pocket.

On Friday, the family of Jazmir Tucker held a press conference with two attorneys, Robert Gresham and Stanley Jackson from the Cochran Firm. Family members had viewed the released body and dashcam videos the previous day.

Tucker’s mother, Ashley Green, said, “He was still a baby. He was loved by everybody. We’re always going to remember him and the great things he did for everybody. We’re always going to miss him because he put a smile on everybody’s face.” She also said that she learned of the news about her son through social media, saying, “The police never addressed us. No one ever came to me. I came to them.”

When asked about the gun found on Tucker, attorney Gresham said, contrary to the claims of the police, “these officers had no idea he had a weapon on him based on where they found it. So, from our perspective and from a legal perspective, at this time considering the officers don’t appear to have known about it, it’s not relevant to what’s going on here.”

Also responding to the video, Akron Mayor Shammus Malik said the recordings left him with “many questions,” including why the officers did not turn on their bodycams immediately after leaving their cruiser and why it took so long for them to provide aid to Tucker.

When asked why the officer’s identities had not been released, Malik gave a rambling response about “specific threats that officers are facing versus the value that we do have in transparency, and so we will continue to work on assessing that and making that evaluation in light of releasing the information we did last night.”

Mindful of the mounting public anger against the epidemic of police shootings across the US, the

Democratic Party mayor also said, “In hindsight, the amount of time that expired between the shooting and the initiation of physical aid to Jazmir is deeply troubling to me.”

Akron Police Chief Brian Harding said the investigation is in its early stages and that “My hope is that the investigation will provide more clarity.” Although he did not specify what needed to be clarified, most investigations of police killings return a judgement that the shooting was justified. The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation is leading the probe and Akron police are carrying out their own separate internal investigation.

The Akron Police Department has not released how many times Tucker was shot and where on his body he was shot. That information, according to Captain Michael Miller, was not immediately known by department officials and was likely known by the Summit County Medical Examiner’s Office.

News 5 has reported that the automatic rifle used by the officer to kill the teen was not department-issued, but was his personal weapon. Chief Harding said the majority of police rifles are not department-issued and the officers purchase their own, “but they have to qualify them with us and they go through training.”

When a reporter for the *Akron Beacon Journal* contacted the medical examiner’s office on Thursday, Chief Investigator Gary Gunther said preliminary details about Tucker’s death could not be released due to state law.

A group of protesters organized a demonstration on Friday on South Main Street in downtown Akron. The protesters chanted “No justice no peace” and “Justice for Jazmir” and brought hand-made signs, one of which said, “Jazmir was a boy forever.”



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