

Texas county sheriff stonewalls despite graphic video of police killing unarmed man

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In response to a graphic report on NBC News on the police killing of an unarmed man in east Texas, the Rusk County Sheriff's Office continues to reject any responsibility for the execution-style murder.

The NBC report featured the first national television broadcast of dashcam footage showing the fatal September 14, 2022, shooting of Timothy Michael Randall by Sgt. Shane Iversen, then employed at the sheriff's station in Turnertown, Texas, a small town about two hours east of Dallas.

The chilling dashcam video of the fatal traffic stop, released to the public in June 2024, clearly shows that Iversen killed Randall in cold blood. Additionally, the video makes clear that Randall was cooperative with Iversen's demands and that at no point during the traffic stop did he act in a threatening manner.

The statement from the sheriff's office declared:

We are disappointed by NBC's portrayal of the incident involving Deputy Iversen. The story, in our view, failed to provide a balanced or complete account of the facts and omitted essential context that shaped the deputy's response.

The statement repeated the usual excuses for police killings: that it involved "a split-second decision made by a deputy operating alone," that the dash camera video "captures only one angle of an evolving situation" and that the victim of the shooting supposedly initiated the violence, although the video shows the opposite.

Randall's mother, Wendy Tippitt, filed a civil suit against Rusk County and Iversen, who took retirement

from the sheriff's office shortly after the killing.

Rusk County was eventually dismissed as a defendant, but in January 2025, a federal magistrate ruled that Iversen was not protected under the Supreme Court doctrine of "qualified immunity." Federal District Judge Jeremy Kernodle has been considering this ruling and could render a decision at any point, leading either to a public trial or dismissal of the case.

The public release of the video set off protests in mostly rural Rusk County and residents flooded the Rusk County Sheriff's Office Facebook page with outraged posts. Both the sheriff's deputy and the 29-year-old construction worker he killed were white, underscoring the reality that class and not race is the fundamental factor in police violence.

An additional issue is the impact of decades of continual warfare on the part of American imperialism. Iversen enlisted in the Marines in 1986, later shifting to the Army and becoming a Special Forces soldier, doing combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and rising to the rank of senior sergeant. After retirement in 2009, he became a police officer in Texas, first in Dallas and then, since 2020, in Rusk County.

At the time of the traffic stop, Randall had just left a night club when he was stopped by the Rusk County deputy at approximately 12:30 a.m. Concurrent to the traffic stop, Randall was speaking to his mother on his phone. As Iversen walked to his car on the driver's side, Randall bid her goodbye, telling her he'd be home soon.

Iversen claimed that Randall had failed to stop at an intersection. Randall denied the allegation and told Iversen that he came to a complete stop.

Iversen then ordered Randall to exit his vehicle and he complied, asking the deputy if he could see evidence of the alleged traffic violation. As Randall exited his

car, he placed his wallet in his back pocket and adjusted his belt.

Iversen then belligerently ordered Randall to get his hands out of his pockets and to turn around and place his hands atop the car's roof to which Randall acceded. Iversen attempted to force Randall's hands behind him, making clear he intended to handcuff him. Randall asked the deputy why he was being arrested.

Iversen then grabbed Randall forcibly and threw him to the ground, and Randall scrambled to his feet. Iversen struck him and knocked Randall down again. In clear panic, Randall got up and begged, "Officer, please." Iversen pulled his gun and pointed it at him, shouting, "Get down!" and shot Randall once in the chest. Randall yelled with pain and ran 100 feet down the street before he collapsed, dying moments later.

After calling for an ambulance, Iversen phoned a colleague and told him in a hushed voice, "I just smoked a dude."

A grand jury failed to indict Iversen, and the Rusk County Sheriff's Office recommended that he retire, with no additional charges.

Speaking to the *Austin-American Statesman*, Wendy Tippitt said that after repeated inquiries into her son's killing, "nobody was telling us anything." After asking to see the dashcam footage she was refused, and Tippitt filed a lawsuit to release it, to which she obtained nearly two years after her son's death.

Tippitt, a housekeeper, told NBC News that she was outraged when the grand jury returned a "no bill" and refused to indict Iversen for shooting an unarmed man.

Tippitt stated, "The only person that was attacking anybody was Sgt. Iversen attacking my son."

Speaking to the working class character of the majority of the victims of murders committed by the police, Randall's older brother Douglas told NBC News, "Me and my family, we don't come from money." He added, "No one has said an apology in Rusk County. No one has shown remorse."

Tippitt's attorney Joseph Oxman told NBC News, "I think it's the worst police shooting I've ever seen. It looks like an execution."

The police shooting of Randall is just one of over 1,000 victims killed by the police every year. In 2024, the number of victims rose to a record 1,365, according to Mapping Police Violence.

The extraordinarily high numbers of killings by

police is a part of the ruling class repression against the working class, who are increasingly entering into class struggle against capitalist barbarism.

As the World Socialist Web Site wrote in 2018,

The steady rise in police killings in the United States is the manifestation of an ongoing civil war between the ruling elite, the top one-tenth of one percent, and the working class. It is not "white cops vs. black youth," as portrayed by the media and groups like Black Lives Matter and the pseudo-left, anxious to elevate race over class. It is the armed representatives of the capitalist state (frequently black and Hispanic, as well as white) against the most impoverished sections of the working class, white, black, Hispanic and Native American.



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