

CHINA

# Hong Kong Student Shot by Police Is ‘The Bravest Type,’ Cousin Says

Tsang Chi-kin, 18, is first hit by live round, in what police say was self-defense

*By Joyu Wang, Wenxin Fan and Jing Yang*

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HONG KONG—The high-school student shot in the chest by police during a street battle on Tuesday is a seasoned protester who is “never afraid to speak his mind and would put his words into action,” according to a cousin.

Tsang Chi-kin, 18 years old, became the first protester to be shot with live ammunition on the increasingly perilous front lines of the protest movement that began in Hong Kong in early June. He was taken to a hospital and as of early Wednesday morning was out of surgery in stable condition, health officials said.

Witness accounts and videos put Mr. Tsang, wearing a gas mask with a pink filter, among a group of protesters wielding metal bars who fought with police during afternoon demonstrations in the northwestern district of Tsuen Wan.

One video shows Mr. Tsang swinging a bar at a police officer, who shoots the protester at close range with a pistol. Another shows Mr. Tsang lying face up on the ground talking as blood spilled from the left side of his chest. He shouts his name and asks to be sent to hospital.

“My chest hurts so much,” he says.

Mr. Tsang is “the bravest type,” said his cousin, Thomas Chan, who has also attended rallies but described Mr. Tsang as the family’s leading protester. “Brave” is the word used by many in the protest movement to refer to those on the very front lines.

Police officials said the officer who shot Mr. Tsang had fired in self-defense. “The officer at the scene was being cornered, he had no other choice but to use his gun,” said Hong Kong Police Commissioner Stephen Lo Wai-chung. “His life was in danger.”

Mr. Tsang was arrested for assaulting police officers, but police had yet to decide whether to charge him, Mr. Lo said.



Police approach protesters in Hong Kong on Tuesday. Police have fired warning shots in recent weeks, but the shooting of a protester on Tuesday was a first. PHOTO: KIN CHEUNG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bond Ng, Mr. Tsang's lawyer, said Wednesday that his client made it through an operation, was still in intensive care but his condition was no longer considered life-threatening. He wouldn't comment further. A middle-aged woman arriving at the hospital ward identified herself as one of Mr. Tsang's relatives but she declined to comment and left immediately.

Mr. Tsang's school expressed concern about the shooting and said the principal and teachers had been to the hospital to comfort the family. It also urged students to be careful during public events and said it would provide counseling services to anyone who needed them.

Clashes between protesters and police had become more fierce and more frequent, and reached a new level on Tuesday. As of midnight, 74 people had been injured, two of them in critical condition and two in serious condition, according to the Hospital Authority.

In recent weeks police officers have fired live warning shots in the air when outnumbered or outflanked and under attack. There were six gunshots fired in four incidents on Tuesday, said the city's police chief, who accused violent protesters of putting officers' lives at risk.

In one district, video footage shows, two officers fired live warning shots after protesters swarmed an isolated team of officers and attacked them with sticks and bricks. The protesters fled.

The number of confrontations Tuesday across more than a dozen districts as far as 25 miles apart meant police lines were stretched thin, despite thousands of officers being deployed to the front lines.

The city was already on edge after police chiefs had warned on Monday that they had gathered intelligence that suggested protesters were planning to kill police officers, though no evidence was provided.

Young protesters, including students and schoolchildren as young as 12, have been a driving force of street protests this year. Some have favored violent tactics, throwing Molotov cocktails and bricks at police. Face-offs have escalated as protesters in turn accuse police of brutally beating people.

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A 20-year-old college student who was present when Mr. Tsang was shot said she saw protesters rush police officers outside a

Tsuen Wan restaurant after they arrested two demonstrators, in an attempt to rescue the pair who were detained.

“We did charge at the police,” she said of the protesters. “But the shooting was totally unnecessary. I am really mad.”

A video released by a local university publication followed the attempt of Mr. Tsang and a group of protesters to ambush the policemen, but shows no detention. A video by another school shows Mr. Tsang wielding a bar in one hand and holding a blue buoyancy aid in the other as a makeshift shield. He swings the bar at a police officer, who was pointing a handgun at him while holding a rifle in his other hand. The officer squeezes the trigger and the boy staggers back, falling to the ground.

After the shooting, more police rushed over and at least one other officer pulled his gun, driving the group away. Then a protester threw a Molotov cocktail at the police, the video shows.

There were other instances Tuesday of police drawing their standard-issue handguns.

Another 20-year-old student said he and dozens of protesters were stuck in an alleyway a minute’s walk from the shooting site. Police fired tear gas and nonlethal ammunition at them while they hurled bricks and Molotov cocktails at the officers.

At one point, an officer about 10 yards away pulled out his gun and pointed at the protesters, but didn't fire, the protester said.

"I believed it would no more than be a warning shot into the sky," he said. He later heard about Mr. Tsang. "A live round? Damn it!," he said. "I want to beat up the police, but am scared they would shoot again."

—*Joanne Chiu contributed to this article.*

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