

PITTSBURG POLICE RELEASE BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE

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FULL TEXT

PITTSBURG >>In response to a request from this newspaper, the Pittsburg police department released body camera footage showing an officer shooting an Antioch man in a restaurant parking lot back in January. The nearly 18 minutes of audio and digital footage shows Terry Amons Jr., 43, being shot by Pittsburg officer Dillon Tindall as Amons sits in a car in a Nations parking lot. Six shots are fired. Both officers, including the one who fired, testified in an inquest hearing they thought Amons was reaching for a revolver found in the center console of the car.

A 20-second portion of the video shows Amons with both hands on the wheel, but then he lowers his right hand. As Tindall opens the door, shouting, "Do not reach for that (expletive) gun" and "put your (expletive) hands up," Amons raises his left hand and appears to grasp a glove in his lap with his right hand. The shots are fired moments later. "I'm not reaching for nothing," Amons can be heard saying, after he's shot. He then falls from the car as Tindall and another officer continue to yell commands.

A few seconds after Amons falls out of the car, he continues to say, "I wasn't reaching for nothing, I swear to God." Tindall is heard calling for medical aid, and then they handcuff Amons.

One officer then comments that Amons had gloves and asks if "he was going to 211" the Nations, referencing the penal code for robbery. They are also heard telling Amons "stay with us" and to keep breathing, and he groans and struggles to breathe.

About two minutes and 30 seconds after the shooting, another officer arrives to provide medical aid and police take the handcuffs off Amons.

A roughly two-minute portion of the footage became publicly releasable under the state's transparency laws when it was played in open court during a formal review of Amons' death, which occurs for all in-custody deaths countywide. A month after this newspaper filed a records request for the short video, police elected to release the 18-minute audio/video compilation showing the shooting and its aftermath, and pictures of the revolver.

A statement from Pittsburg police Friday said this was done "in an effort to be completely open with our community."

"We want to remind the public, this continues to be an emotionally painful and difficult situation for all involved and our thoughts remain with Mr. Amons' family", Pittsburg Police Chief Brian Addington said in the written statement.

The city of Pittsburg rejected a legal claim filed by Amons' family, their attorney John Burris said. They are considering filing a lawsuit and will review the footage with a police tactics expert retained by Burris' firm, he said. Burris watched the footage Friday afternoon and said he thought the officer "seemed to panic" and misinterpret Amons' actions.

"I must admit, I do not see (Amons) reaching for that gun. I see him playing around with gloves, but certainly not reaching. He was trying to comply," Burris said. "I have reservations about the justification of this shooting, frankly."

During a June coroner's inquest hearing, Tindall testified he and another officer were called to the area because of a report of a suspected drug deal. He and Officer Jesus Arellano approached both sides of Amons' car, and shots

were fired within 30 seconds of approaching. Amons was hit four times, and three wounds were considered fatal. "There was no doubt in my mind he was reaching at the firearm at that point," Tindall testified in June, saying he believed Amons was "gearing up for something." He said he feared for his and the other officer's safety. A coroner's inquest jury ruled that Amons died "at the hands of another, other than by accident." The ruling is one of four choices inquest juries are given, besides suicide, accident or natural causes. The decision carries no criminal nor civil liability.

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Credit: By Nate Gartrell, ngartrell@bayareanewsgroup.com

Illustration

Caption: PHOTO: PITTSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT Pittsburg police have released officer body camera video showing an officer-involved shooting in January 2018.

DETAILS

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