

Danville police officers identified in fatal - Reidsville Review, The (NC) - April 12, 2018

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Two Danville police officers shot at **Juan Markee Jones** when he suddenly whipped around with his arms outstretched following a tense confrontation early Sunday — one officer with two years on the force and the other with five years.

As is procedure during officer-involved shootings in the city, the Danville Police Department released the names of the two officers on Wednesday. Officer Christopher S. Simpkins began working for the department on Dec. 1, 2012, and Officer David J. Branch began on March 1, 2016. Neither have served with other departments, city police have confirmed.

Both officers will remain on administrative leave until the investigation is completed.

Jones, a 25-year-old black man from Danville, was shot twice in the chest, Dr. Sara Ohanessian, with the Roanoke Medical Examiner's Office, confirmed to The Associated Press. She said that her office was conducting a toxicology report that is not yet completed.

It is not known if both officers shot Jones — city police referred the question to Virginia State Police, which is investigating the incident. Requests for verification were not returned by the end of business Wednesday.

Jones' cause of death was a gunshot wound to the chest, Ohanessian confirmed to the Register & Bee.

He was likely unarmed — no weapons were found at the scene, state police have confirmed.

The incident has placed Simpkins and Branch — both white men — into a national, and divisive, narrative involving the deaths of unarmed black men at the hands of police officers, as well as the protests that followed.

That narrative includes Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man who was fatally shot in March by police in Sacramento, California, and stretches back the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014.

And as with other shootings, protests erupted. The first came early Sunday outside SOVAH Health-Danville, where Jones was pronounced dead. The next came Monday, as more than 100 people marched on Danville's city hall carrying signs and chanting slogan calling for justice.

By Tuesday afternoon, Danville Police Chief Scott Booth released one angle of the body cam footage to the media in an effort to curtail rumors about the shooting.

The roughly eight-minute video begins when police arrive at 205 Sunset Drive, where Jones is observed with a woman claiming that he assaulted her.

Another officer arrives on the scene, and asks if the man is armed.

"I don't know," an officer replies.

Jones stays in his car, ignoring commands to turn it off, get out, and show his hands. Instead, Jones drives his car into the brush-filled, wooded area at the end of the cul-de-sac. Officers chase him down.

Partially surrounded, Jones gets out of the vehicle, but does not show officers his hands. He stands with his back to his car and his left side toward the officers. His left hand is at his side and his right hand invisible to officers.

An officer holds a Taser and fires in an attempt to stun Jones. It doesn't work — because of the brush, only one of the two prongs fired from the pistol-like device hit Jones, meaning there is not a full circuit connected to him to deliver an electric shock.

Seconds later, Jones whirls around with his hands outstretched at chest level. Gunshots are heard and Jones drops.

Small protests continued outside Danville city hall Wednesday evening. This one had two dozen black teenagers and young adults sitting on the stairs of the building, filling out a form to hold a community gathering at Ballou Park.

One girl held aloft a sign that said "Pray for our city."

Jade Buskin was in charge of filling out the form, with guidance from several police officers. One officer brought lollipops out for the children that were there with their parents.

"This event isn't just about Juan," Buskin said. "It's about the entire community."