

# After shooting, officer loses job; He was still in probationary period when he killed N.J. man along road

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## FULL TEXT

South Whitehall Township has ended the employment of the rookie officer charged in the July 28 shooting death of Joseph Santos along Hamilton Boulevard.

Jonathan Roselle, 33, was still in the probationary period of his employment with the township when he shot Santos, 44, of Hasbrouck Heights, N.J., seven months after joining the police force.

South Whitehall Township Manager Renee Bickel said township leaders have decided not to keep Roselle on the force now that the probation period has ended, effective Thursday. Roselle's annual salary was \$62,920.

Roselle is charged with voluntary manslaughter and is scheduled for a preliminary hearing Sept. 20. He was informed of the township's decision a few days ago, said his criminal defense attorney, Gavin Holihan. And he was disappointed, Holihan said.

"We think the decision by the district attorney's office obviously carried a lot of weight," he said.

The shooting sparked protests and rallies in the township, mostly by those who saw the death of an unarmed Latino man as the latest in a string of police shootings of unarmed men of color across the country.

Before Labor Day, the local chapter of the NAACP issued a travel advisory, cautioning minority citizens in South Whitehall to be on heightened alert over the holiday weekend.

Eyewitness videos of the shooting show Santos jumping on the hood of Roselle's police car and pounding his fists on it. He climbs off and starts walking away from Roselle, who was shouting for him to get on the ground. A moment later, he turns around and walks toward the officer. Roselle can be heard ordering Santos to the ground, but Santos continues to move forward.

Witnesses told police Santos had been jumping on moving cars on Hamilton Boulevard and had asked passers-by for help. Roselle, an Army veteran of Afghanistan who had been patrolling alone for only five months, radioed for help with a mental issue.

"Don't do it," Santos said as he walked toward Roselle, according to Lehigh County District Attorney Jim Martin.

Roselle then fired five gunshots. Santos was pronounced dead at the scene.

Roselle was charged after a joint investigation of Martin's office and Pennsylvania State Police.

Authorities found that Santos was not armed. Though he was behaving erratically, he did not demonstrate a serious enough threat to warrant the use of deadly force, Martin said in announcing the charges last month.

Roselle had working nonlethal tools he could have used instead, Martin said, including a Taser, pepper spray and a baton.

Holihan said Roselle made a judgment call when he shot Santos because he feared for his life. He has called the shooting justified and said he will explore what effect Roselle's military training may have had on his actions.

The shooting prompted a local examination of police tactics and the use of deadly force against unarmed men of color - an issue that has sparked debates, protests and violence across the country.

While Martin said he did not think race played a role in the South Whitehall shooting, advocacy groups have disagreed. Rallies were held at the site - one in memory of Santos and one to support Roselle. An interfaith

memorial service for Santos had community leaders calling for change.

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Credit: By Sarah M. Wojcik - Of The Morning Call - swojcik@mcall.com;Twitter @Sarah\_M\_Wojcik;610-778-2283

Caption: Roselle

Santos

In this image taken from video, Joseph Santos approaches a South Whitehall Township police officer along Hamilton Boulevard moments before he was fatally shot. The officer, who was later charged with voluntary manslaughter, was responding to reports of a man jumping on passing cars.

Contributed photo

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