

Details emerge in police shooting

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FULL TEXT

VINELAND –A 911 call reporting a stranger on a porch who wouldn't leave brought police to the West Wood Street home where an officer fatally shot the suspect on July 14.

On Wednesday, the Vineland Police Department released a transcript of the initial 911 call that preceded a 28-minute encounter ending in the police-involved shooting of Rashaun "Pac Man" Washington.

The transcript was stripped of identifying information. "Redactions were made to safeguard the identity of the caller," police explained, referring to reports of threats.

At 11:22 a.m. July 14, the call came into the city's police dispatch, transferred from the Cumberland County 911 Emergency Communications Center.

Vineland Dispatcher: 911 where's your emergency?

County Dispatcher: Vineland, it's Cumberland County with a transfer. I have [Redaction] on the line. [Redaction] at [Redaction]. [Redaction] reporting that someone's on [Redaction] porch sitting there. [Redaction] asked them to leave, they won't. [Redaction] doesn't know who they are. [Redaction] calling from [Redaction].

Vineland Dispatcher: OK, hello.

Caller: Yeah hi.

Vineland Dispatcher: Hi and the person's just sitting there?

Caller: Yeah it's a black dude, he's sitting there, [Redaction] don't even know [Redaction]. And he's over there sitting on the porch [Redaction]. He says he's waiting for backup. I don't know who he is. I've never seen him and he's just sitting there.

Vineland Dispatcher: OK, what color shirt is he wearing?

Caller: He has no shirt. He's wearing tan pants.

Vineland Dispatcher: No shirt and tan pants?

Caller: Yeah, he doesn't have no shirt.

Vineland Dispatcher: OK, is he being disorderly or ...?

Caller: Well [Redaction] asked him to move and [Redaction]. He's acting like, I don't know ...

Vineland Dispatcher: Like he's on something?

Caller: He looks like he's on something.

Vineland Dispatcher: OK, we'll have an officer on the way.

Caller: All right.

Vineland Dispatcher: All right, bye bye.

Several officers were dispatched to the area of Wood Street and the Boulevard, about a block from police headquarters.

At 11:36 a.m., a dispatcher noted the "male subject has something under his white shirt and is stating for police to 'shoot him/kill him' once police arrived."

Nine minutes later, a dispatcher notes the "male subject is reporting to officers on location that he has an explosive device that will take him ... out."

The release of the 911 transcript comes six days after the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office released videos recorded by Vineland police body cameras of the deadly encounter and an appeal from Washington's family for an

independent investigation into the shooting.

Body camera videos show police speaking with the 37-year-old Bridgeton man, trying to determine why he is upset and urging him to calm down as he tells police he has an explosive device.

"Stay calm for us, OK," an officer tells Washington, urging him think of his children. "We can talk about this."

"What can we do for you?" an officer asks Washington as he paces back and forth while holding something wrapped in a shirt. An officer demands Washington put the shirt on the ground so they can talk.

"What can we do to help you?" the officer ask him.

Then in an instant, Washington appears to approach an officer. Shots are fired, and Washington falls to the ground.

The details of what unfolded remain under investigation by the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office and debated by the public.

Washington's family is calling for the state Attorney General's Office to conduct an independent investigation into the shooting and additional training for police officers.

A prosecutor's office statement released last week noted Washington was "acting suspiciously" and alluded to having an "explosive device" while holding something wrapped in a T-shirt, which later turned out to be a garden shear with 8 1/4-inch blade.

The prosecutor's office asks anyone with information about the incident to contact Detective Joseph Lowry at 856-453-0486, ext. 11197.

Anyone who wants to share information anonymously may download CCPOTIP app for Android or iPhone devices; send a tip via text to 847411, using the keyword CCPOTIP in the message line; or submit a tip at the prosecutor's Facebook page or website, njccop.org.

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Family and friends of Rashaun Washington join demonstrators in front of the Vineland Police Department on July 19.

Joe Lamberti/Staff Photographer

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