

With back to officers, suspect abruptly whirls - Danville Register & Bee (VA) - April 10, 2018

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A body-camera video released to the media Tuesday by the Danville Police Department shows the events leading up to the fatal police-involved shooting of **Juan Markee Jones**, 25, early Sunday morning.

Because of "misinformation on social media" and in the interest of public and police safety, Danville Police Chief Scott Booth said he decided to release the video and talk to the media about the incident Tuesday. He said he believes it is the first time the media has been offered copies of body-camera video.

The roughly 8-minute video shows multiple officers confront Jones on Sunset Drive as he sits in his car and then tries to back away as officers yell at him to stop.

When asked if Jones had a weapon, Corinne Geller, public relations director for the Virginia State Police, confirmed by email to the Register & Bee on Tuesday that a weapon was not recovered at the scene. State police are leading the investigation.

The video aired for media starts as police arrived in the 200 of Sunset Drive shortly after 1 a.m. Sunday. Jones is seen with a woman who reported he assaulted her.

He then gets into his car and backs further down Sunset Drive, toward a cul-de-sac, with officers yelling at him to shut the car off and get out of it, the video shows.

Jones pulled his car up to a brush-filled wooded area at the end of the cul-de-sac. It's very dark out, the only light coming from cruiser headlights and the officers' flashlights.

In the video officers repeatedly tell him again to exit the car and when he does, to show his hands.

Jones instead stands with his left side toward the officers and his left hand at his side. His right hand cannot be seen.

There are more shouts, with officers ordering him to cooperate. When Jones did not respond, an officer attempted to use a Taser to stun him, but only one prong hit him, causing him to flinch.

Deputy Chief Dean Hairston explained that both prongs of a Taser must hit a suspect for the circuit to be completed. At this time, Hairston said, the incident is still under investigation by the Virginia State Police, but it is believed the second prong got tangled up in the brush.

Officers repeatedly told Jones to show his hands, but not to reach up, video shows.

Jones, with his back to the officers, abruptly whirls around toward them with his hands outstretched. That's when police open fire and Jones drops to the ground.

"That's what the officers saw that night," Hairston said. "The decision they made was based on his reaction at that time."

Dr. Sarah Ohanessian, with the state's Medical Examiner's Office, confirmed Jones' cause of death was a gunshot wound to the chest.

Booth said he showed the video to family members on Monday and again Tuesday.

"It was a very emotional experience," Booth said.

Community leaders, including the Danville Ministerial Alliance, were also shown the video.

"I wasn't going to go any further than that until I shared it with the family and certain community leaders," Booth said.

Booth said a protest outside the police department Monday night was a peaceful one.

"[That] is exactly the way I want them to remain," he said. "We got word earlier today that we had some outside interests that were here that were trying to change the narrative of the situation in a way I don't believe is accurate from the information I'm getting."

"The footage we are showing was selected because it shows the footage that best depicts the incident from the viewpoint of that officer or officers that fired their weapon," Booth said.

Further information will have to come from the state police, Booth said.