

Colorado Man Who Killed Naked Intruder Is Fatally Shot by the Police

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

The authorities say that Richard Black Jr. of Aurora may not have heard repeated orders to put down his gun.

FULL TEXT

A 73-year-old Aurora, Colo., man who fatally shot a naked intruder who broke into his home, only to be killed by one of the police officers who responded, may not have heard orders to put down his gun because of a hearing impairment, the police said Thursday.

Early Monday morning, Aurora police officers approached a home in the northern part of the city where they believed an intruder was trying to drown an 11-year-old child, Police Chief Nicholas Metz said at a news conference. Officers heard gunshots from inside the home, and as they stood by the front door, they saw Richard Black Jr., a resident of the home, with a gun in one hand and a flashlight in the other, he said.

Mr. Black, known as Gary, did not obey at least five commands to drop his gun, Chief Metz said. As he walked toward them, an officer fired four times, fatally shooting Mr. Black.

"We don't know why, but for whatever reason, Mr. Black did not drop the gun," Chief Metz said. He said the family had told him that Mr. Black had a significant hearing impairment from his time in the military, and it was possible he may not have heard the officers' orders.

During the news conference, Chief Metz described footage captured by the body camera worn by the unidentified police officer who fatally shot Mr. Black, a disabled Vietnam War veteran who received a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. It was the sixth officer-involved shooting this year by an Aurora police officer, officials said, and the second time in just more than month that the officer who shot Mr. Black had fatally shot someone while on duty.

Chief Metz said he met with the Black family Thursday morning and read a statement from them asking that the body camera footage and 911 call from Mr. Black's wife, Jeanette, not be released to the public.

"The family desires space to grieve and does not wish to have the final and violent moments of Gary's distinguished life be his public legacy," he said.

The letter also said that the family acknowledged that responding officers were not given a description of the intruder. The Associated Press previously quoted Siddhartha H. Rathod, a lawyer for the family, as saying that Mr. Black's wife had told officials the intruder was black and her husband and son were white.

Mr. Rathod did not respond to a phone message or email on Thursday.

Chad Hayashi, Mr. Black's stepson, was asleep in his stepfather's home Monday when he woke up to a commotion, he told ABC News on Wednesday.

He got up and found a woman in the home, who told him: "My son is on drugs and he has your baby," Mr. Hayashi told the station. He said he rushed to the bathroom, where he found a naked man soaking wet in the bathtub, choking his son.

Mr. Hayashi said he began hitting the intruder repeatedly until the man eventually released his son. The intruder then attacked Mr. Black with a vase, Mr. Hayashi said, and Mr. Black pulled out a gun and shot the man twice in the torso.

After Mr. Black left the bathroom, Mr. Hayashi said he heard gunshots before screams of "police" and heard people

entering the home.

Chief Metz said officers repeatedly commanded Mr. Black to drop his gun. He began walking toward them and raised his hand, holding the flashlight. That is when the officer fired, Chief Metz said. Mr. Black died at a hospital. Officers found the dead intruder, identified as Dajon Harper, 26, of Denver, on the floor of the bathroom. Mr. Hayashi and his son were in the bathtub, and the son was screaming that the intruder was the person who had assaulted him, Chief Metz said.

The officer who fired his gun has been placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation by the Aurora and Denver Police Departments. The officer, whose name the authorities did not release, was also involved in a fatal shooting on June 27, according to Officer Kenneth Forrest, a spokesman for the Aurora police.

That day, officers investigated reports of a man with a gun in northwestern Aurora. He ran, the police said, and officers ordered him to drop his weapon before fatally shooting him. One of the officers, the same one involved in Monday's shooting, was placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation.

Officer Forrest said that officer returned to his duties on July 15 after being cleared by the department's evaluations.

"We believe that this officer was ready to come back to work," Chief Metz said Thursday.

In the interview with ABC News, Mr. Hayashi said it was his stepfather's actions that saved their family.

"He lived a hero, he died a hero," he said. "We'd all be dead if it wasn't for him."

Credit: Melissa Gomez

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