

Police Report in Killing of Black Security Guard Is Criticized as Rushed

Haag, Matthew . New York Times (Online) , New York: New York Times Company. Nov 14, 2018.

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Illinois authorities defended an officer who killed the guard, Jemel Roberson, as he tried to stop a gunman at a bar. A Roberson family lawyer says the police are rushing to judgment.

FULL TEXT

The Illinois State Police took steps on Tuesday to defend the actions of a suburban Chicago police officer who killed an armed security guard on Sunday, claiming that the guard was not wearing a uniform and ignored verbal commands to drop his weapon. But witnesses have contradicted that account, and it was not clear how the State Police reached its conclusions.

The findings by the state's Public Integrity Task Force, the lead agency in the case, were based on a preliminary investigation into the killing of the guard, Jemel Roberson, 26, who was responding to a shooting at a bar. But a lawyer for his family disputed the state's account and criticized the agency for rushing to judgment just days after the deadly encounter.

"We are three days into this and they are saying preliminarily that it was a good shoot?" the lawyer, Greg Kulis, said in an interview on Wednesday. "They traditionally take nine months or longer."

The killing of Mr. Roberson has ignited protests and demands for justice, just a month after a Chicago police officer was found guilty of second-degree murder in the high-profile killing of Laquan McDonald, a black teenager who was shot 16 times by an officer in 2014. Protesters have pointed out that Mr. Roberson, who was black, was killed even though he was a "good guy with a gun," the type of person put forth by the National Rifle Association and President Trump as a solution to mass shootings.

The shooting on Sunday morning occurred while Mr. Roberson was chasing after a gunman who had opened fire inside the bar, Manny's Luxury Lounge in Robbins, Ill. The man had struck four people inside, and Mr. Roberson was trying to detain him when the police arrived.

A white officer with the Midlothian Police Department encountered Mr. Roberson in a parking lot outside the bar, and according to the State Police, gave "multiple verbal commands" for Mr. Roberson to drop his weapon. The officer then opened fire on Mr. Roberson, the State Police said.

On Tuesday, Chief Daniel Delaney of the Midlothian Police Department said he was "completely saddened by this tragic incident."

"What we have learned is Jemel Roberson was a brave man who was doing his best to end an active shooter situation," Chief Delaney wrote on Facebook . "There are no words that can be expressed as to the sorrow his family is dealing with."

The man suspected of opening fire inside the bar was being treated on Wednesday in a hospital, the Cook County Sheriff's Office said. He has not yet been charged.

Mr. Roberson, who lived in Chicago, had hoped to become a police officer, Mr. Kulis said. Other security guards at the bar encouraged him to stay home on Saturday night because he had an early engagement the next morning, playing the organ at his church. But Mr. Roberson kept his promise and showed up at work.

His mother, Beatrice Roberson, has declined all news media requests for interviews, Mr. Kulis said.

In the days after the shooting, Mr. Kulis filed a federal lawsuit against the Midlothian officer, whose name has not been made public, on Ms. Roberson's behalf. He also filed a request in court for the Midlothian Police Department, along with the other agencies that responded to the scene, to preserve all evidence in the case. And on Wednesday, Mr. Kulis said he planned to subpoena the State Police for the information it used to reach its preliminary conclusions.

"It's really bizarre that their preliminary statement is that arguably the shooting was justified," Mr. Kulis said.

Mr. Kulis said he located several witnesses whose accounts contradicted the State Police's findings. They told him that Mr. Roberson was wearing a black ski cap with the word "Security" across the front, Mr. Kulis said.

One witness also said that he screamed at the officer not to shoot Mr. Roberson. "He was yelling, 'He's security, he's security, he's security,'" Mr. Kulis said.

None of those witnesses have been interviewed by the State Police, Mr. Kulis said.

"I don't know what they are relying on," Mr. Kulis said.

Credit: Matthew Haag

DETAILS

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| Location: | Cook County Illinois Chicago Illinois Illinois |
| People: | Trump, Donald J McDonald, Laquan |
| Company / organization: | Name: National Rifle Association--NRA; NAICS: 813410, 813940; Name: State Police-Illinois; NAICS: 922120; Name: Facebook Inc; NAICS: 518210, 519130 |
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