

Full military funeral for Vietnam veteran mistakenly shot and killed by an Aurora police officer

Haythorn, Russell . CNN Wire Service ; Atlanta [Atlanta]26 Aug 2018.

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FULL TEXT

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Aurora, CO (KMGH) – Family, friends and veterans gathered for an emotional funeral service Saturday honoring Richard “Gary” Black.

Black is the Vietnam veteran who was mistakenly shot and killed by an Aurora police officer while defending his own home against an intruder on July 30.

“Richard ‘Gary’ Black was a hero in Vietnam and I believe he died a hero,” said chaplain Mark Potter. Black was a Purple Heart and four-time Bronze Star recipient.

During that home invasion in July, attorneys say a naked man broke into the Black home and attacked their 11-year-old grandson.

That’s when Black grabbed his gun and shot the intruder.

“He understood the meaning of defending our country,” said Sen. Rhonda Fields of Aurora, who attended the funeral. “And then at the very end, he continued to be a strong soldier by defending his family.”

When officers arrived at the Black home, according to police chief Nick Metz –who also attended the funeral Saturday –police in the front yard ordered Black to drop his weapon at least five times over the course of 13 seconds.

But Black lost a lot of his hearing while serving his country in Vietnam.

“He wasn’t able to hear correctly and he had some sight problems,” Potter said. “It’s very tragic what happened here.”

Despite the tragedy, hundreds gathered Saturday to celebrate a man who gave so much.

“He’s phenomenal,” Potter said. “A true hero. He was a hero coming out of that war, and he died a hero defending his family.”

The officer who shot and killed Black was involved in another shooting just months before fatally shooting Black.

In that case, the officer was placed on leave for less than a month, which has prompted state lawmakers to call for tougher and more extended leave policies.

Those same lawmakers are advocating for the release of all body camera video from the Black shooting as well.

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