

Attorneys say video shows man did not have a gun when a Chicago cop fatally shot him last month

Gorner, Jeremy; Hinkel, Dan; Sweeney, Annie . Chicago Tribune (Online) , Chicago: Tribune Interactive, LLC. Jul 26, 2018.

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FULL TEXT

Video released Wednesday shows a Chicago police tactical officer fatally shooting a 24-year-old man as he tried to scale a fence last month in the Bronzeville neighborhood.

Attorneys for the family said the footage challenges the Police Department's account of Maurice Granton ignoring orders to stop during a foot chase, pulling a weapon and firing at the officer before he was shot June 6.

Attorney Antonio Romanucci acknowledged that a gun was found at the scene, estimating it was about 20 to 25 feet from Granton's body, but he said many questions remain about the shooting.

"If you're a young man in the city of Chicago, do not run from the Chicago police," he said. "Maurice did not have a weapon in his hand when he was shot."

Romanucci accompanied family members who viewed the footage Wednesday at the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, the city agency that investigates police-involved shootings. COPA then made the video public, about two weeks before the typical 60-day deadline.

The shooting remains under investigation.

Granton's father, Maurice Sr., wearing a red T-shirt with his son's image emblazoned on it and the message "Heaven Couldn't Wait In Loving Memory, Maurice Granton 1994-2018," told reporters that the video was "hard" for family members to watch. He also questioned the police version that his son shot at police.

"He's not a person who would have an armed confrontation with a policeman," he said. "He didn't deserve death for whatever crime they think he committed."

Documents released Wednesday by COPA identified the officer who fatally shot Granton as Sheldon Thrasher. Records show Thrasher, who is African-American, joined the department in 2013. He could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Department officials said that both Thrasher and a second officer involved in the shooting have returned to active duty after taking a mandatory 30-day leave following the incident.

In a statement Wednesday, Chicago police noted that COPA has not requested that any officers involved in the incident be relieved of police powers and placed on desk duty.

Department officials said the Wentworth District tactical officers were in the area conducting a narcotics investigation when they were directed to the 300 block of East 47th Street.

Surveillance footage showed Granton and others milling around under the CTA Green Line before a police car pulls up and the men scatter.

The body camera from one officer captured him saying, "Come here, man," and then chasing after Granton, who jumped a wooden fence, leaving the view of that officer's body camera. That officer abandoned the chase, shouting in pain. The view from his camera indicated he was limping away.

But his camera captured the sound of a single gunshot, then a pause, followed by three more shots in quick succession.

The body camera footage posted from the officer who appears to have opened fire did not include audio from the time of the shooting.

That video showed Granton running across a vacant lot and darting onto a wrought iron fence with one leg raised. As both hands reached for the top of the fence, the officer can be seen raising his gun. The footage then showed Granton immediately fall from the fence, stumble to his left a few feet and then drop to the ground, writhing in pain. Granton was shot in the back, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office.

About 10 seconds into an emergency dispatch recording released by COPA, an officer can be heard saying, "Shots fired at and by the police."

"They're calling a 10-1," said the dispatcher, signaling the code for an officer in distress. "...Shots fired at and by the police."

COPA also released a 911 call made by a woman who claimed the police shot Granton five times.

"He wasn't even doing nothing!" the caller shouted. "They shot him five times (when) he was on the gate, the police!"

"Can y'all please, y'all can save his life if y'all hurry up!"

A use-of-force report filed by Thrasher —released by COPA along with other audio and video evidence —said he reported to supervisors that Granton was armed with a semi-automatic pistol and fired on him.

His body camera video included audio in the moments after the shooting, and the officer who fired can be heard pointing other officers to a gun near Granton. As irate bystanders approached shouting "Maurice!" the officer told them, "He woke."

At one point, the officer exchanged words with a man nearby as other officers arrived and confronted the bystanders.

Thrasher was heard on the video encouraging Granton to "stay woke."

In comments to reporters, Granton's father said his son was "left on the ground like an animal."

"I'm just seeking justice," he said. "It was a coldblooded murder."

The Police Department released a limited video shortly after the shooting that it said showed Granton holding a gun sometime before he was shot by the officer. The department also tweeted out a photo of a 9 mm handgun it said was recovered.

Romanucci on Wednesday took exception to those releases by the department, saying none of the images answered key questions.

"We do not know if Maurice Granton was holding that gun. We do not know if that gun was fired," he said. "We don't know anything about the gun except the narrative that the Chicago Police Department issued on the day of the shooting."

Romanucci also said it was "deeply disturbing that after all this time Chicago police officers are not trained to de-escalate situations."

Granton was pronounced dead at University of Chicago Medical Center. He had been treated at the same hospital just days before for a graze wound near his right eye. He refused to cooperate with police after officers found him lying in an alley in the South Side's Chatham neighborhood, authorities said then.

Granton had two convictions for robbery and theft and several arrests on suspicion of trespassing and drug possession. His last arrest was in 2016, records show.

But his family said that with the birth of two daughters in recent years, Granton had put his criminal behavior in the past.

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