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Concerning HB 972: The New North Carolina Police Video Law

On May 29, 2016 John Mark Coffey was shot and killed by 8 police officers in the Burger King parking lot in Clinton, North Carolina. Some have estimated that he may have been shot in excess of 200 times. That same day The Clinton Police Department released a statement (see page 4) regarding the shooting. However, it appears as if they were unaware at that time that a cell phone video of the shooting exists. You can watch the video on YouTube. Here's a link to the cell phone video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jhs9PFXBbhs>



Trooper Louis M. High Jr.



Image taken from video showing first shot fired.

The following day on May 30, 2016 the cell phone video was broadcasted on the news and The Clinton Police Department released another statement (see pages 5 and 6) with some notable changes. In the first press release they said the male subject pointed “the shotgun” at them. Also they failed to mention the fact that he opened the driver's door. In the second press release they said that the male subject opened the driver's door and pointed “a weapon” at them. Note how they went from “the shotgun” to “a weapon”. A shotgun is long and it's hard to believe that someone pointed a shotgun while sitting in the cab of a pickup. The term “a weapon” is more vague and affords the officers more leeway in explaining why they started shooting. In the first press release it appears that the police were trying to hide the fact that John Coffey was sitting in the truck when they opened fire. It also appears that they were trying to hide how many shots they fired and they changed their story in an attempt to make it fit the video. It seems as though the first statement was released before the cell phone video went public and the

second statement was released after the police became aware of the video. Those 2 press releases have since been removed from The Clinton Police Department Facebook Page by the way.

In the video you can clearly see that Trooper Louis M. High Jr. of The North Carolina State Highway Patrol fired the first of countless rounds which were fired during the incident. He is standing on the right side of the video toward College Street. He fires a shotgun 3 times and it jams. He then backs away and can be seen trying to unjam the shotgun. At 8 seconds into the video he throws the shotgun down and pulls out a pistol. He fires all the bullets from the pistol, reloads, fires all the bullets from the pistol again, reloads again, then walks up closer to John Coffey's truck and fires what seems to be approximately 8 more rounds. And there were 7 other officers shooting as well. Note too that when Trooper High fires the first round you can see the driver's side door of John Coffey's pickup move as if it was hit by that first round which would mean that Trooper High shot through the driver's door (or window) therefore the door was blocking his line of sight. You can also see bullets hitting the driver's side window of John Coffey's pickup which means the window was rolled up. Also, when the first shot is fired look through John Coffey's windshield and you can see him slump over as if he was hit by the first round. But you never see any "weapon" fall on the pavement below the driver's door of his pickup. It could be argued that the "weapon" he supposedly pointed at the officers fell inside the truck but if he pointed this supposed "weapon" out the door there is at least some possibility that he would have dropped it on the pavement when he was hit by the first round.

It's also worth mentioning that Trooper High shot and killed another man named Jason Lee Evans on April 12, 2015. At that time he was a deputy with The Sampson County Sheriff's Department. Here are the links to 2 different articles giving 2 different explanations of why Jason Evans was shot. One article says he had a gun pointed at his own head, the other article says he pointed a gun at Trooper (then Deputy) High:

<http://clintonnc.com/news/827/deputy-justified-in-shooting>

<http://abc11.com/news/sampson-county-sheriffs-deputy-shoots-and-kills-robbery-suspect/654777/>

Please note that in the second press release (see page 6) the Clinton Police Department did not use Trooper High's complete name. In every article I've been able to find which was written before John Coffey was killed Trooper High's complete name was given (Louis M. High Jr.). But in every article I've been able to find regarding The John Coffey Shooting Trooper High's name was given as M. High. Could they have been trying to hide the fact that he was involved in both shootings?

After The North Carolina Chief Medical Examiner released the autopsy report John Coffey's widow spoke to The Sampson Independent Newspaper in Clinton and she says The Medical Examiner is lying. Here's the link to the article:

<http://clintonnc.com/news/12045/wife-suicidal-statements-bunch-of-lies>

One thing I can't help noticing about this whole situation is the apparent secrecy. It's amazing just how little information there is available about this shooting. According to what little I've been able to glean Hope Valley Funeral Service (Address: 1246 Hobbton Hwy, Clinton, NC 28328, Phone Number: 910-592-0061) disposed of John Coffey's body. But there's nothing about whether his body was cremated or not. There's no picture of him. Hardly any information at all. His obituary isn't even on The Sampson Independent Website.

And then there's the new dashcam/bodycam law, HB 972. The Judiciary Committee of The North Carolina House Of Representatives approved that bill somewhere around 9 days after John Coffey was killed. That seems to be an awfully strange coincidence. It seems possible that HB 972 may have been specifically designed to prevent the public from viewing the dashcam and bodycam footage of The John Coffey Killing. We have the cell phone video which shows plenty. But it seems possible that there may be something on the dashcam and/or bodycam videos which shows in greater detail what really happened and that may be why they don't want the public to see it. Could it be that those videos contradict what the police are saying?

On September 26, 2016 Sampson County District Attorney Ernie Lee (Phone Number: 910-596-6610) announced that none of the officers involved in this would be charged with a crime. The new dashcam/bodycam law went into effect 5 days later on October 1, 2016. Yet another strange coincidence. Believe it or not the police claim that John Coffey got out of the truck and was standing in the parking lot with a gun and pointed the gun at them. How convenient that none of that can be seen on the cell phone video. They also claim they told him to surrender. However as soon as he opened the door they started shooting. The last time I checked you have to open the door of a vehicle in order to get out unless you climb out the window. Here's a link to the story.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/bd2d8fc3-95d3-5d5a-9fd3-351c39334e9d.html>

Disclaimer: The information contained in this 6 page document is merely one person's viewpoint protected as free speech under The First Amendment Of The United States Constitution.



May 29, 2016

Clinton Police Department Press Release

On Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at approximately 11:57 pm, the Clinton Police Department responded to the Burger King restaurant at 100 Southeast Boulevard for an unknown call for help. Uniform officers arrived and found a male subject in a truck armed with a shotgun in the parking lot.

Responding officers including a trooper from the North Carolina State Highway Patrol cordoned off the parking lot and attempted to negotiate with the subject to surrender. The male subject did not respond to the officer's commands to put the weapon down. At approximately 12:18 am, the male subject pointed the shotgun at the officers who returned fire, fatally striking the subject.

The male subject was pronounced dead at the scene. His identity has not been determined at this time. There was no injury to the officers.

The Clinton Police Department has requested the State Bureau of Investigation to conduct an investigation in the details of the shooting. The Department's Internal Affairs Unit will also conduct an administrative investigation into the shooting. All officers involved have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of these investigations.

Clinton Police Department
222 Lisbon St.
Clinton, NC 28328
Telephone - (910) 592-3105
Facsimile - (910) 592-2421
www.cityofclintonnc.us

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May 30, 2016

Press Release

Clinton Police Department

On Saturday May 28, 2016, around 11:55 PM the 911 Communications Center received a call from a citizen stating they had been asked by a male subject to call 911. The caller stated the person was sitting by himself in a white Dodge truck in the Burger King parking lot with the park lights on. Neither the caller nor the male subject gave a reason why they needed police. At 11:58 PM officers were dispatched.

Around 12:01 AM on Sunday May 29, 2016, two officers arrived at the business. Shortly after arriving on scene, one of the officers called by radio stating that the man had a shot gun. As the two officers backed away from the subject, they took cover and started negotiating with the male. Six additional Clinton Police Officers and one NC State Highway Patrol trooper responded and cordoned off the parking lot.

A Clinton Police Department commander was on scene overseeing the event. Officers attempted to negotiate for approximately twenty minutes with the male subject to put the weapon down and surrender. During this time, the commander coordinated with officers on the scene and the E911 telecommunicator to ensure the safety of citizens at a nearby home and at the Burger King. The commander also asked for an EMS unit to stage near the scene.

During the police attempts to negotiate, the male subject told officers that he had five rounds and was not coming out of the vehicle. The subject was unresponsive and would not comply with their requests to put the shot gun down.

At approximately 12:18 AM the male subject opened the driver's door and pointed a weapon at the officers. The officers then fired multiple rounds at the male, fatally striking him. EMS was immediately called and they pronounced the subject dead at the scene. There were no injuries to the officers.

The NC State Bureau of Investigation was called to investigate the shooting, which is the Clinton Police Department's policy. The results of this investigation will be turned over to the District Attorney. The Internal Affairs Unit with the Clinton Police Department is conducting an Administrative Investigation into the shooting. All officers have been placed on administrative leave.

The Clinton Police Department has both in-car video and body worn camera systems. During this incident there were five body cameras and four in-car video cameras recording the officers' response. The systems were activated at the time of the officers' arrival and continued recording throughout the event, to include the shooting. The videos are being turned over to the SBI as part of their investigation.

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The SBI has identified the male subject as JohnMark Coffey, 53 year old white male, of Warsaw, North Carolina. The NC State Medical Examiner's office will be conducting the autopsy.

The officers who have been placed on administrative leave are:

Lieutenant R. K. Dalton, a 11 year veteran with CPD,
Sergeant A. D. Clowney, a 10 year veteran with CPD,
Detective S. M. Crespo, a 2 year veteran with CPD,
Corporal J. A. Kittrell, a 11 year veteran with CPD,
Corporal J. A. Snell, a 2 year veteran with CPD,
Officer A. W. McDuffie, a 1 year veteran with CPD,
Officer B. N. Hall, a 1 year veteran with CPD, and
NCSHP Trooper M. High, who has been with the Highway Patrol for one year.

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