

Video shows officers tasing man who later died



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Video shows police in Virginia tasing man 02:41

Story highlights

A medical examiner's report listed the May 2013 death as accidental

The cause of death was listed as "acute cocaine intoxication"

(CNN)—Graphic video shows the minutes leading up to the death of a Virginia man while in police custody.

Officers can be seen tasing Linwood Lambert, 46, multiple times while he is handcuffed, outside of a hospital where the officers had initially taken him for medical help.

The incident happened in May 2013 in South Boston, a town of 8,000 in southern Virginia, but it is receiving renewed attention after a [report aired Wednesday on MSNBC](#).

According to a medical examiner's report, Lambert died after going into cardiac arrest. The cause of death was listed as "acute cocaine intoxication" and the manner of death as an accident. Lambert's family disagrees and has reportedly filed a civil suit against South Boston police alleging excessive force, wrongful death and denial of medical care. They are seeking \$25 million in damages.

Family attorney Joe Messa said he couldn't believe what he was seeing on the video.

"It's outrageous. It's uncalled for," he said. "It's the kind of thing that shocks your conscience, and it shocks my conscience as an attorney and should shock the conscience of the public."

Police have denied the allegations. They say Lambert's erratic behavior required the use of force.

"We are vigorously defending the case on behalf of the South Boston Police Department and its officers as we strongly believe the Defendants did nothing wrong in their interaction with the late Mr. Lambert on May 4, 2013 and that their actions did not cause his death," read an attorney statement. "Our position is affirmed by the reports of two independent, well qualified experts in the field."

CNN attempted to contact the South Boston Police Department but has not heard back.

The video begins with officers picking Lambert up at a motel after receiving a call about a disorderly subject.

He was not armed and not accused of any crime.

But officers say they decided to take Lambert to the hospital for a mental health evaluation anyway, after he made some disturbing comments.

Inside the patrol car, police say Lambert kicked a window. Video shows him bolting out of the car and running toward the doors of the hospital while handcuffed.

Lambert doesn't make it inside. The officers give chase and appear to tase him multiple times. He falls to the ground. They tell him to get on his belly and threaten to tase him again if he does not comply.

Lambert then tells the officers that he had taken cocaine. He asks: "Why you all trying to kill me?"

Instead of taking him inside, the officers put Lambert back into the patrol car, where it appears he is tased again.

MSNBC, which cited company device reports, reported that the three officers discharged their Tasers 20 times over a roughly 30-minute period.

It's unclear how many of those discharges made contact, and CNN could not immediately confirm how many times Lambert was tased.

By the time officers arrived at a detention center several minutes away, Lambert was unresponsive. He was later pronounced dead at the same hospital he'd visited earlier with the officers.

The family disputes the medical examiner's report and puts the blame squarely on police.

"There's no accident here. It wasn't accidental that they tased Mr. Lambert the first time or the second time or the third time or the fourth time," said Messa. "The conduct is unconscionable."

And the acute cocaine intoxication?

"Simply, in a straightforward way, it's dead wrong," the attorney said. "I'll tell you ... the amount of cocaine in the system was a miniscule trace amount. It was nowhere near a level that is lethal."

CNN's Pamela Brown and Sam Reyes contributed to this report.