

Notes on police violence

Baltimore police officer caught on body-cam planting drugs

By Matthew MacEgan
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The public defender's office in Baltimore recently released information about a January drug bust in which an officer was recorded on his body camera planting drugs when he thought it was not recording. The man who was arrested has been held in jail since that time on \$50,000 bail, which he was unable to post. The man has now been freed, and the officer has been suspended.

The body-cam video was recorded on January 24, and shows the officer, Richard Pinheiro, standing in a yard full of trash along with two other officers. Pinheiro is holding a soup can with a transparent plastic bag stuffed into it, which he then places within a pile of garbage. He and the other officers then move out into a narrow access alley.

In the alley, Pinheiro activates his body-cam, unaware that it had also captured the previous 30 seconds of video before activation. He and the officers then stage themselves finding the plastic bag full of illegal drugs, even making up phony dialog, such as, "I'm gonna go check here, hold on," and "Yo, hold up." The fabricated "search" lasted only 15 seconds.

The body-cam footage of police planting drugs was sent by the public defender's office to the state attorney's office last week, prompting the release of the man who was charged with the crime. Baltimore police officials stated that they had been watching the man who they believed was selling heroin and storing it in that garbage-filled yard back in January.

According to the Baltimore Police Department, the man had already been stopped earlier that day, purportedly possessing and selling drugs. The police department showed that they had another video where the officers found a knotted bag containing 25 heroin

capsules, and that they were hoping to find an open bag nearby. The open bag is what Pinheiro is supposedly finding on the video released by the defender's office.

Baltimore police officials are using this first video to excuse Pinheiro's actions, stating that he may have found the open bag legitimately, but wanted to make sure it was found on camera. They have stated that their focus now is to learn "why" the officers would have staged a discovery. They did not admit that one faked video could also mean that the first video was also faked.

Even though the prosecutor's office claimed to be "appalled" by the incident, they are allowing Pinheiro to testify in another case this week. According to their office, he was named as a witness in some 53 other active cases.

Debbie Katz Levi, of the public defender's office, stated, "We have long supported the use of police body cameras to help identify police misconduct, but such footage is meaningless if prosecutors continue to rely on these officers, especially if they do so without disclosing their bad acts. Officers should not be able to decide when to turn the cameras on and off."

Saginaw, Michigan police shoot handcuffed man in back of patrol car

On Wednesday afternoon, police officers in the Township of Saginaw in Michigan shot and killed Farhad Jabbari while he was in the back of their squad car. The man had been arrested on suspicion of driving while intoxicated, and when investigators arrived at the scene the man had been shot to death with one hand still cuffed.

The officer who was driving the car reported that

Jabbari was moving in a way “not usual” for a person who was handcuffed. Purportedly, Jabbari had managed to slip his handcuffs to the front of his body. A second officer arrived in a separate patrol car after which Jabbari purportedly began assaulting both officers while they adjusted his cuffs. Witnesses heard three to four gunshots, one of which hit and killed Jabbari. The assisting officer was shot in the arm, and the one who fired had injuries to his face and eyes.

Some of Jabbari’s friends spoke to the media about him. “I saw him two weeks ago, and he seemed perfectly fine,” Tim Morningstar said. “I know he had been battling depression.” Court records show that Jabbari completed one year of a suspended sentence for a no contest plea in a domestic violence case in 2016, leaving him with no criminal conviction. Both officers are on administrative leave.

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