

I have a problem with the media determining, based upon its limited knowledge of policing, whether particular conduct is inappropriate. Let's consider the police officer shooting the 12-year-old boy in Cleveland recently (Tamir Rice). Please watch the following two-minute video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPK7vRKXkmI>

“The boy was playing with the gun on the playground at Cudell Recreation Center, pulling it from his pants and pointing it at people’, a man told a 911 dispatcher. The toy’s orange safety tip had been removed, and the caller said the boy was ‘scaring the s— out of everyone.’ He also noted that the boy was ‘probably a juvenile’ and that the gun was ‘probably fake,’ but that message was reportedly never relayed to police.

When two Cleveland police officers arrived at the scene, a rookie officer saw the boy beneath a gazebo, picking up the gun and tucking it into his waistband. Police said the officer ordered him to raise his hands, but he raised his shirt instead — reaching for the gun. The officer fired twice. One shot hit the boy in the stomach." (Bever, 2014, para. 3).

The video clearly shows the boy pointing the pistol at people. There was no orange tip at the end (it had been removed). He was threatening people that he was going to shoot them.

How would you react, as a police officer, if you received such information and arrived on scene? The boy reached in his waistband, after being clearly ordered to put his hands up, and the officers witnessed the boy previously place the pistol in the same waistband that he reached for. Deadly force is authorized pursuant to police procedure.

What is the standard operating procedure (SOP) for responding to such a call? Are the police trained to pull up close, or is the SOP to gain distance, seek cover, draw firearms, and command the suspect to put his or her hands up?

The media will turn this into yet another issue of race. However, I think that the crux of this is whether SOP dictates how far away police are trained stop a patrol car when responding to such a call (if there is an SOP). Distance allows for reflection time in making a judgment call...maybe split-seconds, yet this is all the time that may be needed.

Absent a violation of SOP, I doubt that a grand jury will indict the officers. Finally, even though there has been no founded police misconduct yet or indictment from a grand jury, the Cato Institute has identified the incident as police misconduct. See the following link:

<http://www.policemisconduct.net/>

The boy's death is a tragedy regardless of how it happened. Yet the media has already judged the situation as police misconduct and this creates further tension between law enforcement and citizens...and all the initial released videos weigh in favor of the police officers engaging in valid police procedure.

Reference:

Bever, L. (2014, November 23). *BB gun that looked like a semi-automatic pistol*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/24/cleveland-police-kill-12-year-old-boy-wielding-bb-gun-that-looked-like-a-semi-automatic-pistol/>