

Press Release

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Office of Police Accountability finds NYE shooting of Iosia Faletogo by SPD officer consistent with policy

SEATTLE, WA – The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) released findings from its months-long administrative investigation into the fatal shooting of Iosia Faletogo by a Seattle Police Department (SPD) officer. After evaluating the facts and circumstances of the incident, OPA found the officer's conduct followed SPD policy and training.

The incident occurred on December 31, 2018, in north Seattle following a traffic stop in which Mr. Faletogo fled on foot. Multiple officers ran after him, and an on-the-ground scuffle ensued. Body-worn video revealed that Mr. Faletogo did not comply with police commands and was in possession of a handgun. After struggling with officers and being ordered not to reach for the gun, Mr. Faletogo stated, "nope, not reaching." Almost simultaneously, one of the officers fired a single, fatal shot.

Regarding the finding, OPA Director Andrew Myerberg said, "I recognize the death of Mr. Faletogo was a tragedy. He left behind family, friends, and a community who loved him. However, OPA's investigation found that the officer made the difficult, split-second decision to use deadly force because he perceived he was in grave danger given Mr. Faletogo's immediate access to a weapon and lack of compliance."

Less than one second elapsed from when Mr. Faletogo said "nope, not reaching" to the moment the shot was fired. OPA determined that, even had the officer who fired the shot heard the statement, it would not have been possible for him to change his actions given the quickly-evolving and chaotic nature of the situation.

The case went through both internal and external investigations to ensure a full evaluation of the facts. This included an independent criminal review by the Washington State Patrol and multiple SPD administrative investigations. No criminal charges were recommended or filed.

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The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) has authority over allegations of misconduct involving Seattle Police Department (SPD) employees relating to SPD policy and federal, state, and local law. OPA investigates complaints and recommends findings to the Chief of Police. OPA is led by a civilian director, while its investigations are currently carried out by SPD sergeants.
