

Cases Tied to Killing Of Jones Are Dropped; Officer Who Shot Student Initiated Probe

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Prince George's County prosecutors dropped two first-degree assault charges yesterday against the man whom undercover Cpl. Carlton B. Jones allegedly thought he was following the night he shot and killed a Hyattsville man in Fairfax County.

Prince George's State's Attorney Jack B. Johnson said in an interview that he dropped the charges against Derrell Lamont Gilchrist specifically because Jones initiated the investigation. After Jones shot and killed Prince C. Jones Jr. on Sept. 1, it was disclosed that the police department had found Carlton Jones guilty of filing a false police report in a 1997 case but that prosecutors had never been told of the finding.

Johnson announced in February that because of the guilty finding, he would never again call Carlton Jones as a prosecution witness. He also said then that he was dropping or reviewing 22 cases in which Jones was the key investigator. But the charges against Gilchrist were dismissed only yesterday.

Gilchrist's attorney, Douglas J. Wood, said he believes that the charges were trumped up to "create the impression Gilchrist was a dangerous guy, to corroborate Carlton Jones's account that he shot at a bad guy."

He noted that although the first assault allegedly took place in July 2000, Gilchrist was not named in a warrant until six weeks after Howard University student Prince Jones was slain.

"I don't know how we can explain to a jury that someone assaulted a police officer and was not charged with that offense for three months," Johnson said.

Prince George's police spokesman Royce Holloway said only that "the state's attorney has the right to make such determinations." Carlton Jones's attorney did not return a telephone message left last evening.

Gregory L. Lattimer, a lawyer representing Prince Jones's mother in a federal civil lawsuit against police, said the police account that Carlton Jones thought he was shooting at Gilchrist is "a concocted fairy tale they have come up with in order to justify their utter stupidity in following Prince Jones and blasting him to death."

Lattimer said Prince George's and Fairfax County police have testified in depositions that Carlton Jones said he believed he was shooting at an associate of Gilchrist's, not Gilchrist.

According to court records, the associate is 5 feet 9 inches tall. Gilchrist is 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighs 250 pounds. Prince Jones was 6 feet 2 inches tall and about 200 pounds.

Police alleged that Gilchrist tried to run officers over in a car on July 13, 2000, but Gilchrist was not charged with the assault until Oct. 16. Four days after police obtained the warrant, they tried to arrest Gilchrist, who again tried to run them over and again eluded arrest, according to police charging documents.

Johnson dropped both of those cases.

"The fact [that Carlton Jones] lied in an official capacity has to undermine anything he is related to," said Johnson, explaining why he dropped the assault charges against Gilchrist.

Carlton Jones's fatal shooting of Prince Jones created a firestorm of controversy and sparked a U.S. Department of Justice investigation, which officials recently closed, saying that they found no evidence contradicting Carlton Jones's contention that he acted in self-defense when he fired 16 rounds at Prince Jones's back. Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Robert F. Horan Jr. had earlier declined to prosecute the officer, saying he acted in self-defense.

Carlton Jones has told investigators that he was afraid for his life because Prince Jones backed into his vehicle twice.

The series of events involving Gilchrist began with Carlton Jones, Johnson said yesterday. On July 13, 2000, undercover county narcotics police officers set up a meeting between Gilchrist and a confidential source in Hyattsville, according to police charging documents.

The source asked Gilchrist to deliver a large amount of crack cocaine, according to the charging documents. It was Jones who said a confidential source was fingering Gilchrist as a drug dealer, Johnson said.

Gilchrist ignored orders by uniformed officers who tried to arrest him, backing his truck toward officers and brushing one detective, the charging documents alleged. Gilchrist then drove away, the documents state.

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