

PCP found in body of teen shot 16 times by Chicago cop

Jeremy Gorner



Police redirect traffic near the 4100 block of South Pulaski Road where Laquan McDonald, inset, was fatally shot by Chicago police in October 2014. (Quinn Ford / Chicago Tribune)

A knife-wielding teen had PCP in his system when he was shot 16 times by a Chicago police officer in October, documents from the Cook County medical examiner's office reveal.

A toxicology report from just two weeks ago listed that the hallucinogenic drug had been found in the blood and urine of Laquan McDonald, 17.

The City Council is scheduled Wednesday to decide whether to approve a settlement of \$5 million to McDonald's family. The council's Finance Committee backed the agreement Monday.

Federal authorities disclosed Monday that the FBI is leading a criminal probe of the officer who fired the barrage of shots.

PCP, or phencyclidine, is also known as "angel dust" and is usually smoked. At times, it can cause its user to become aggressive and combative. The drug can also cause drowsiness, increased pulse and respiratory rates, high blood pressure, convulsions and seizures.

Lawyers for McDonald's family declined to comment on the PCP finding. A spokesman for city Corporation Counsel Stephen Patton, whose legal team negotiated the proposed settlement, did not respond to requests for comment.

The Tribune obtained the March 31 toxicology report through a Freedom of Information Act request. The report shows that McDonald's body tested negative for cocaine, heroin and alcohol.

The autopsy report showed that McDonald was shot 16 times, including in the scalp, neck, both sides of his chest, back, both arms and his right hand and leg. Altogether, the bullets left about two dozen entrance and exit wounds over the teen's body.

Police have said the officer shot McDonald because he lunged at him with a knife, but lawyers for the teen's family told the city he was walking away from officers.

Patton on Monday told the Finance Committee that dashboard camera footage of the shooting was crucial to the city's decision to settle the case before a federal lawsuit was filed. He said lawyers for McDonald's family initially sought \$16 million.

The incident started with a 911 call reporting that an offender was trying to break into vehicles in a trucking yard at 41st Street and Kildare Avenue, according to Patton. The caller told the 911 dispatcher that the man had a knife and threatened him with it.

Patton said two officers found McDonald about a block from the trucking yard holding a knife in his right hand. McDonald ignored orders to drop the weapon and instead walked along 40th Street while one of the officers followed on foot and another in a marked squad car.

Since neither officer was armed with a Taser, one of them requested that a dispatcher send another officer to the scene who had one, Patton said.

When the officer behind the wheel pulled his vehicle in front of the teen to prevent him from encountering possible passersby or other civilians, McDonald punctured one of the tires with his knife before striking the windshield with the weapon, Patton said.

McDonald, with the knife still in his hand, walked around the squad car and then walked or jogged away from the officers through a nearby Burger King parking lot, Patton said. At that point, two additional squad cars showed up, he said. One of those cars, equipped with the dashboard camera, followed McDonald as he walked on Pulaski.

Camera footage captured the other car pulling in front of the teen and two officers exiting with guns drawn before one of them opened fire.

According to other records in McDonald's medical examiner file, the officer who shot McDonald used his duty weapon, a Smith & Wesson 9 mm handgun.

That officer has been put on paid desk duty pending the outcome of the investigation.

Jeremy Gorner is a beat reporter for the Tribune's Metro staff, covering the Chicago Police Department. He joined the Tribune in 2006 to cover breaking news for its online news desk. Before joining the Tribune, Gorner covered crime at the now-defunct New City News Service, formerly known as the City News Bureau of Chicago.