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NAACP wants Minneapolis to fire 2 officers

By David Chanan
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The Minneapolis NAACP is calling for the firing of two Minneapolis police officers who struggled with a 44-year-old man before he died.

Christopher Burns' death Nov. 1 was caused by neck compression and ruled a homicide, the Hennepin County medical examiner's office said Tuesday.

At least one officer used a neck hold, thought to be a lateral vascular neck restraint, on Burns, authorities said.

It was unclear whether the

hold alone killed Burns, who the medical examiner's office said had a history of high blood pressure with advanced coronary artery disease.

The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is investigating Burns' death. The investigation will go to a grand jury to determine whether the officers' actions were justified or whether they may have violated the law.

In a news release Wednesday, the NAACP also demanded that the Hennepin County attorney's office file charges and that the Police Department and city apologize to Burns' family.

"Another black man has been killed at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. The officers involved must be held accountable," said Brett Buckner, the NAACP's second vice president. "There has been a pattern in our community of that not happening in the case of police officers."

Police said Burns violently resisted officers who responded to a report of a domestic dispute at an apartment in the 2300 block of Chicago Av. S. Burns went limp while officers Mark Johnson and Lucas Peterson were struggling to subdue

him, police said.

Burns was going for an officer's gun during the struggle, police said. However, Burns' fiancée said through her attorney that police threw the handcuffed Burns to the floor, put an object to his neck and pulled back.

"We have been communicating with Chief Robert Olson about excessive force, and if this isn't a case of excessive force then I don't know what is," Buckner said.

Once the case involving Burns is concluded, the police training unit will review how the officers handled the situa-

tion, said spokeswoman Cyndi Barrington. The internal affairs unit will review the case for policy issues, she said.

The Minnesota Black Republican Coalition said in a news release Wednesday that it was asking for a "meticulous investigation" of Burns' death.

Mayor R.T. Rybak said that he couldn't comment on the NAACP's demands because Burns' death is still being investigated. Olson said the Police Department could not act until the Sheriff's Office investigation is finished.

Olson this week delayed the start of federal mediation

aimed at improvements in community-police relations, saying it wouldn't be productive to start without agreement on who should be represented. He acted after the Minneapolis Urban League and the NAACP questioned why they weren't asked to participate.

"As the city and community stand on the verge of federal mediation, it is imperative that Police Department does the right thing," the NAACP said in its news release.

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