

Baton Rouge Police fire officer who shot at motorist then claimed he had been shot at first

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October 11, 2018

Publication: The Advocate, The (Baton Rouge, LA)

The Baton Rouge Police officer who shot his gun at a civilian and then claimed he had been shot at first was fired Thursday after an investigation revealed his version of events didn't add up.

Yuseff Hamadeh was fired after an internal investigation into the Aug. 7 officer-involved shooting near Memorial Stadium. Hamadeh reported that a motorist who ran away during a traffic stop had fired a gun at him, but there was no evidence to support the officer's version of the events. The motorist insisted he was not armed.

A criminal investigation into Hamadeh has now been turned over to the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office, said police spokesman Sgt. Don Coppola Jr.

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Police arrested Raheem Howard, 21, days after the traffic stop on a count of attempted murder of a police officer. About three weeks later, District Attorney Hillar Moore III chose not to pursue the case against Howard, citing insufficient evidence. He said that of the multiple witnesses interviewed by investigators, only one person said two shots were fired: Hamadeh. The rest only heard one gunshot.

Howard was initially stopped about 6 p.m. on North 15th Street in the Northdale neighborhood for a missing license plate and immediately ran from the vehicle. Hamadeh pursued him, chasing him through the neighborhood and into a resident's home — then the officer fired his weapon. Witnesses and neighbors reported only hearing one shot.

No one was injured in the shooting.

Upon his arrest, Howard pleaded for investigators and media to review the body camera footage from the incident to prove his innocence. He said he never had a gun or fired at the officer.

After denying a public records request for that body camera footage — despite a new policy to release such recordings — Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul admitted in late August that there was no body camera or dash camera video of the incident. It is against the police department's policy for officers to not activate their body camera in both traffic stops and chases.

While the evidence showed that only one shot was fired, it was not clear Thursday on what grounds Hamadeh had been fired.

"I am pleased with the results of, at least the initial, investigation," said Howard's attorney, Ronald Haley Jr. "This is only the next step for justice in this case. ... We want to see criminal prosecution in here. We are going to demand that degree of justice."

Hamadeh also shot and killed another man in June 2017, also following a traffic stop.

In that incident, police said Hamadeh fired his weapon after Jordan Frazier turned and pointed a weapon at

officers. Hamadeh was later awarded a medal of valor for his response in that incident, however Moore has not yet cleared him of criminal charges in that shooting.