News Release

Jonesboro Police Department

410 West Washington, Jonesboro AR 72401

Contact: Sgt. Lyle Waterworth
870.336.7297 Office
870.933.4686 FAX
lwaterworth@jonesboro.org

Media Release
Chavis Carter Death
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Due to the unusual nature of the Chavis Carter death and the heightened public concern regarding the facts and circumstances of this case the Jonesboro Police Department finds itself in a delicate situation. The department must balance the integrity of the on-going investigation with the publics' right to know and understand the facts and circumstances of this tragic event. At this point in time the Jonesboro Police Department (JPD) has received a number of Freedom of Information requests for videos, text messages etc… We are attempting to comply with these requests as best we can without compromising the investigation, as it is still incomplete, but we believe that we are at a point where we can release the bulk of the information requested. Given this fact, we intend to release certain information, obtained as recently as today, which may help shed light on this incident. Having said that let me stress that the investigation is NOT complete. We are still attempting to locate potential witnesses and we are still awaiting search warrant information related to several of the phone calls and text messages that were sent from and received by Chavis Carter's phone. We cannot release the full scope of this information until this is complete (related to the phone) but we can release some of it.

Given the fact that the investigation is not complete, the entire investigative summary, in detail, is not finished. We are attempting to release a brief preliminary investigative summary in the form of this media release (in order to comply with the FOI requests) but this preliminary summary should in no way be interpreted as the final report. This summary will provide explanation for some parts of the case, but not all, and it will not cover all the evidence and will not answer all the questions that exist. In the course of most death investigations we would not normally release such a preliminary report but would instead choose to wait until the case is complete. In this case, the media, the public and the family of Mr. Carter and the families of the officers involved as well need resolution as soon as possible. Based upon these needs and our efforts to comply with our FOI requests we are making great effort to provide answers to these much anticipated questions.

At this point in time all of the dash cam videos have been released. There are some gaps in the videos. In order to explain this fact one must have a basic understanding of how these systems work. The Jonesboro Police Department has at least two different types of car video/computer systems in place. The older systems (33 of them) are in the process of being phased out as we have had functional issues with them for some time. These systems have problems with the microphones and occasionally the video. They do not have a rear facing camera in the unit that provides video of the rear seat of the police car. The newer systems do have this capability. Both of the patrol units involved in the Chavis Carter incident have the "old type" that does not have rear video. The microphones used in these vehicles are body-carry wireless microphones. Normal wear and tear and movement of the officer's body cause them to malfunction occasionally. The video in the vehicles is activated (turned on) by either pushing a button to turn the unit on manually inside the car or by turning the blue lights of the car on, or by turning it on with the body microphone. Conversely, the video can be turned off manually from inside the car or turned off when the blue lights are turned off. Each of the police unit videos has a time/date stamp on it but they do not always match exactly. There is also a time/date recording in the 911 center of radio traffic from the officers. It is important to use all three to establish a time line for the incident which is somewhat difficult.

In the Carter case, as it relates to the video and audio we have found the following thus far;

The initial responding officer (Baggett) activates his blue lights when he contacts the vehicle which in turn activates his dash-cam. Baggett's car video/audio appears to function properly from the time of the initial contact until he turned his lights off to leave the scene. The video /audio appears un-broken and intact. The second responding officer (Marsh) arrives on the scene and, due to the narrow condition of the roadway, parks his patrol vehicle on the same side of the street as Baggett with his car facing the opposite direction. The video is low in quality and does not show anything of value (as far as we can tell) and appears to be facing into a street light or other vehicle's headlights essentially making the video useless. The audio portion of the video is functioning and remains functional until Marsh searches Mr. Carter for the second time. Marsh's audio malfunctions and ceases as this search is in progress as Marsh bends over to search Carters shoes. Officer Marsh can be heard conversing with Carter about having anything in his shoes and just previous to this he can be heard conversing with the unknown female who identified herself as Carter's aunt. Fortunately, and due in part to Baggett's' proximity to Marsh, Carter, and the "aunt" the conversation is picked up on Baggett's video/audio during this malfunction. Soon after this Baggett and Marsh are observed on the video/audio in front of Baggett's vehicle. We presume that this is the point in time where the weapon was discharged in the rear of the police vehicle and due to the malfunction of Marsh's video/audio this explains the absence of a gunshot or noise on the recordings. We make this presumption after significant review of the witness statements and audio/video files. We also have compared these audio/video files to the 911 tapes to establish an essentially unbroken time line. The only true gap we find in the time line occurs between the time that Baggett turns his blue lights off (deactivating his camera) but we find that Marsh transmits to 911 requesting

assistance and an ambulance (on the 911 tapes) less than 60 seconds after this event. Marsh reactivates his camera at some point after this as ambulances are arriving etc… Remember, this is a preliminary summary. We are continuing to review these tapes and recordings to confirm our investigative measures. Based upon what we know at this time we believe this is accurate. It should be noted that there are points in the video/audio files where there is no audio during certain portions. In these portions we are required to "redact" certain juvenile information and radio traffic that is considered sensitive by the laws and regulations governing the ACIC/NCIC information and radio traffic.

There have been a number of questions arise regarding a test or tests for gunshot residue (GSR) in this case. Mr. Carter's hands were prepared for such by bagging his hands as noted in the previously released autopsy report. GSR test were not conducted by the crime lab pursuant to their policy regarding such test for reasons outline in their memorandum dated March 20, 2001 which will be provided as part of this release of information.

High velocity blood spatter was present on Carter's right hand indicating that his hand was in very close proximity to the contact wound in his right temple area. High velocity blood spatter was also present on the rear passenger door of the patrol unit where he was discovered as well as the fire arm that forensics determined was used to cause Carter's fatal wound. These facts and circumstances are consistent with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The witness statements of the officers and bystanders all stated the patrol car doors and windows were closed and the officers were not near the car until Carter was discovered. This virtually eliminates any possibility that the fatal wound was caused by any weapon other than the one recovered in the rear of the vehicle and that its discharge was caused by Carter.

Autopsy photos of Mr. Carter's arms and wrist show cuff marks that virtually duplicate those marks photographed on those individuals who participated in the re-creation of the incident in the patrol car (see previously released re-creation video). A considerable amount of time passed between the photographs of Carters wrists and his death. The photographs of the participants wrists in the re-creation were made immediately after the re-creation and are more visible but reflect the same appearance and location (see photographs included with this release). It should be noted that the photographs of the re-creation participants were taken before the autopsy photos were released so we (JPD) had not observed the autopsy photos at that time.

Forensic examination of Carter's phone disclosed a number of text messages and a video. The video shows an African–American male (adult) smoking marijuana with two juveniles (approximately 10 years of age). We located one of the juveniles and the adult male. The adult male is Brandon Renald Baker who is incarcerated in the Greene County jail on an aggravated burglary charge. On August 21, 2012 an audio interview was conducted with Baker who advised that he was the male in the video and that Chavis Carter was the person making the video on his (Carter's) phone. One of the juveniles also identified Carter as the person making the video. Baker also stated that he knew that Carter had a small black .380 handgun consistent with that used in Carter's death. Baker also stated that Carter

had purchased the gun from a woman or individual in Jonesboro who was having domestic issues. Coincidentally, the gun was reported stolen in Jonesboro and the person who reported it stolen stated that he thought it was taken during his wife/girlfriends family gathering and this person has pending domestic charges against him. Baker also admitted sending Carter a text message requesting that Carter bring him the/a gun shortly before his encounter with the police.
This (text) occurred at approximately 9:30 pm on the night of Carters death. He was contacted by the police at approximately 10:00pm. Baker also stated that Carter was engaging in a drug deal for 4 ounces of marijuana when he was contacted by police (which is supported by the text messages between Baker and Carter). The video and the audio of the Baker interview are included with this release.

As recently as today an interview of Carter's girlfriend was conducted where she relayed to the primary investigator that Carter called her from the rear of the police car and told her that he loved her and that he had a gun on him (in the rear of the police car) and he was scared. This portion of the investigation continues.

Lastly, there appears to be no doubt that Officer Marsh missed the gun during the initial pat down of Carter. At the time of first contact Marsh did not know whether or not Carter was going to be arrested or released on a citation for the small amount of marijuana discovered on his person as his wanted status and identity had not been determined. It appears that Marsh was attempting to balance the intrusiveness of the search with the unknown facts and circumstances at the time, a decision that all officers must make in the field during suspicious and unknown circumstances. Marsh then placed Carter in the police vehicle, apparently un-handcuffed while the investigation of the traffic stop was being conducted and Carter's identity was being established. Phone records from Carter's phone indicated that he placed two phone calls, at least one from the rear of the police car. Once Carter's identity was established, he was removed from the car and searched again more thoroughly, since it was determined he had an active warrant and would be arrested. It is presumed that Carter secreted the gun in the rear of the car after the pat-down but before the cuffing and second search.

The evidence and witness statements support that Carter committed suicide given the press contact wound, the blood evidence and the witness statements. Witness statements and text messaging support the fact that he possessed the weapon before and during his encounter with the police and tend to offer some narrative as to what activity he was engaged in at the time of his contact with the police as well as the origin of the weapon.

As noted above, this media release is merely a brief, preliminary investigative narrative. Its purpose is to explain the facts and circumstances to the extent possible at this point in the case and to provide some insight into the circumstances of this tragic incident which is no doubt heart-breaking for the family and the officers involved as well.