

# Grand jury declines to indict man who shot at police in Pleasant Grove

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A grand jury has declined to indict Steven Ray Jones after he was accused of intentionally shooting at Dallas police officers last month at a Pleasant Grove apartment complex.

At the time of the shooting, Jones, 27, was on the phone begging a 911 operator to quickly send the police as men tried to kick in the door. Jones said he believed attackers who critically injured his cousin had returned to the apartment.

He said he unintentionally opened fire on the police. Three officers suffered minor injuries from shrapnel and debris.

"I was praying and God came through," Jones said in a jail interview Tuesday after he learned he would go free. "It was an accident."

The Dallas Police Department typically refers cases in which someone shoots another person in apparent self-defense, such as when a homeowner shoots a burglar, to a grand jury. The accused remains free pending the grand jury's decision on whether he or she should face trial.

The Police Department instead arrested Jones on three counts of aggravated assault on a public servant. He has been in jail since the incident June 13.

"Although the person was not indicted, we still believe it was the right course of action because three Dallas police officers were injured during the course of this incident," said Deputy Chief Craig Miller.

Jones' attorney, Bill Wirskye, said the department clearly erred in arresting Jones, given that the 911 recording indicates he wasn't trying to harm the officers.

"Fortunately, the grand jury took a second look at things and came to the right decision," Wirskye said.

On the night of the incident, a brawl broke out and Jones' cousin was shot by an unidentified gunman. Jones and his cousin fled into his cousin's apartment. Jones called 911 to say his cousin was shot and told the operator that attackers were beating on the door.

Moments later, Jones told the operator that someone was kicking the door. The operator, unaware that police were on the scene, told him officers were on the way. Jones then yelled to the people kicking at the door that police were coming.

The officers, believing that someone lay inside bleeding and possibly dying, had decided to kick in the door. But they did not let the dispatcher know that they were doing so.

Meanwhile, one of the officers asked the dispatcher to repeat the comments on the 911 call. The dispatcher responded that the caller's cousin had been shot in the leg, but she did not repeat that the caller thought his attackers were beating on his door.

"She leaves out some critical information," said Assistant Chief Vince Golbeck, who oversees the city's seven patrol stations.

Seconds later, the door flew open and Jones fired two shots as three officers rushed inside. Jones apologized to the officers and begged them not to shoot him.

Golbeck acknowledged that the incident reveals a communications breakdown. The department is now considering requiring that officers notify the dispatcher when they've decided to kick in a door.

"We're not trying to point fingers, but we're just saying, 'Folks, this is how we can do better next time,'" he said.

Internal reviews of the incident are continuing.

Jones still faces a misdemeanor charge of recklessly discharging a firearm because he fired a weapon in the air to try to break up the large brawl.

He is being held in the Dallas County Jail without bail because the aggravated assault charges triggered a probation violation for holding his girlfriend at gunpoint last year. He could be released as early as Thursday.

*Rebecca Lopez of WFAA-TV contributed to this report.*

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