

Joe Nagle, 22, killed by Allegan County, Michigan sheriff during traffic stop

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An as-yet unidentified Allegan County Sheriff's deputy shot and killed 22-year-old Joe Nagle on June 16. According to the sheriff's office, the shooting occurred a little after 10:00 p.m. on 26th Street in Salem Township in Allegan County. The sheriff's office says that the deputy pulled Nagle over and alleges that a physical altercation ensued, during which the deputy shot and killed the young man.

Nagle, who was white, was a native of Comstock Park, a small town just north of Grand Rapids in Kent County, which shares a border with Allegan County. Nagle was well-known in his community as an avid wrestler at Comstock Park High School. According to an ex-girlfriend, Courtney Riva, Nagle was a student at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). His family told Fox 17 that he had recently started working as a driver for FedEx.

The killing of Nagle bears a resemblance to the recent killing of Patrick Lyoya in Grand Rapids on April 4. GRPD officer Christopher Schurr has been charged with second degree murder for shooting Lyoya in the back of the head after a traffic stop turned into a scuffle. In the case of Lyoya, the existence of police dashcam, bodycam and a smartphone video exposed how Schurr carried out the execution-style shooting.

One of the main differences between these two shootings is the level of media attention. The execution of Lyoya, an unarmed black man, gained widespread coverage and became a national news story. So far, the death of Nagle has received little coverage beyond local news in the Grand Rapids area. Due to the fact that there is no police dashcam or bodycam video, it is likely the public will never really know exactly what happened in the dark on a rural road south of Grand Rapids on June 16.

Allegan County Sheriff Frank Baker spoke with WOODTV the day after the shooting. "He had stopped

the vehicle, and at one point after the traffic stop of the vehicle, an altercation occurred," Baker claimed, "and during that altercation a shot was fired by our deputy."

Baker has not explained why the deputy pulled Nagle over to begin with, though his family speculated to Fox 17 that it may have been related to expired tags on his license plate. Nor has the sheriff's office disclosed any details of how the alleged altercation started or how it played out. They have announced that the deputy in question was taken to the hospital with "non-life-threatening injuries."

The sheriff has explained the dearth of factual information in this case by the fact the deputy had neither a dashcam in his vehicle, nor a bodycam on his person. Earlier this year, the county gave the sheriff's office approval to begin buying cameras. However, Baker told WOODTV, "They've been coming in in the last month or so, we've been deploying body cameras out into the field, and about, I'd say, twenty-five percent, maybe thirty percent, of our patrol deputies now have them."

Meanwhile, a few important pieces of information have become available. First, the police have confirmed that the deputy's injuries were not caused by gunfire. Second, the Michigan State Police's Fifth District Special Investigation Section, which is conducting the investigation into the shooting as per standard protocol, has announced that it did not find any firearm belonging to Nagle.

During his interview with WOODTV, Baker went on to say, "It's unfortunate when law enforcement has to use any kind of force, and especially tragic when it has to be a force like this that is used, and our thoughts and prayers are obviously with everybody involved, the deceased, the deceased's family, our deputy, our deputy's family, and all the officers."

After the Michigan State Police (MSP) concludes its investigation, the case will be reviewed by Allegan County officials to decide if the deputy should be

charged. The deputy who killed Nagle, whose name has not yet been made public, is currently on administrative leave until the process is completed.

“This investigation is in its infancy stage, which means we do not have a lot of information to share right now,” MSP stated in a tweet. “Interviewing witnesses, gathering facts, and collecting evidence takes time. We ask everyone to please extend our detectives some grace and patience to be able to complete a professional and thorough investigation.”

Courtney Riva spoke with ABC’s 13 On Your Side about her ex-boyfriend. After explaining that the two had broken up, she said, “But Joe, even though we broke up, our relationship was a good one. He was a good guy, he would do anything for anyone. I have nothing bad to say about him whatsoever. I’m shocked at the news.”

In 2018, Nagle qualified for the state wrestling tournament. About his time as a wrestler, Riva told 13 On Your Side, “He told me about his memories all the time, and his parents, how they always traveled for [wrestling]. And that was something he loved doing. He helped with coaching a little bit last year, to help some of the high schoolers because they all looked up to him.”

She elaborated on this side of Nagle to WOODTV: “Joey wasn’t a fighter. He only wrestled on wrestling mats and that was it.” She went on to say, “He was going to GRCC to become a police officer himself... but then he realized he couldn’t get over the gun part, he didn’t like guns.”

She also spoke about how Nagle’s family has been reacting to the news. “They are heartbroken. None of it makes sense, they just want to know what happened. Our only thought is that the police officer took advantage of his authority really. We’re having a hard time wrapping [our heads] around what even happened, because Joey was not a confrontational guy whatsoever.”



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