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## Man Needed Help but Got Tasered, Sister Claims

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Log In

DANVILLE, Va. (CN) - Police brought a man to the hospital, Tasered him and took him away, only to bring him back an hour later in cardiac arrest, his sister claims in Federal Court.

Linwood Lambert Jr., 46, died because officers with the South Boston, Va., police department "needlessly disregarded" his safety and welfare, according to the April 29 complaint.

Lambert's sister, Gwendolyn Smalls, says the incident began when the front-desk clerk at a Super 8 motel in South Boston heard banging coming from Room 109 at about 4:30 a.m. and called the police.

Lambert had just checked into that room the night before and told the three officers who knocked on his door that he was worried about a blue truck in the parking lot, according to the complaint.

Smalls says the police asked Lambert to leave the motel with them at about 5 a.m., "for treatment of an apparent medical/psychiatric condition."

When the group arrived at Halifax Regional Hospital, "the police officers 'tasered' Lambert 'outside of the ER doors,'" according to the complaint.

"Though it was apparent to defendants that Lambert required emergency medical treatment, they ignored his condition, tasered Lambert multiple times and left the hospital grounds with him," the complaint states.

Smalls says Lambert's whereabouts from 5 a.m. to 6:06 a.m. "are unknown because defendants have refused to supply plaintiff with investigative materials, including but limited to the police report."

"Though he needed critical medical treatment, defendants unnecessarily and wantonly inflicted pain on Lambert and knowingly and willingly disregarded and objectively intolerable risk of harm," the complaint states.

Smalls says the hospital's records show that her brother arrived there at 6:06 a.m. "in full cardiac and respiratory arrest."

"The medical records further state that Linwood Lambert 'was tazed (sic) by PD outside the ER doors earlier ... [and] further state that Linwood Lambert went into cardiac arrest 'when he was in jail.'"

A Virginia State Police statement reported on the South Boston News & Record's website on May 7, 2013, said that the VSP Bureau of Criminal Investigation was investigating Lambert's death.

After South Boston police took Lambert into custody, they transported him to Halifax Memorial Hospital for evaluation, according to the report.

Officers say Lambert became combative with the officers at the hospital, and they took him to Blue Ridge Regional Jail, where it was then discovered he was having a medical emergency.

Smalls notes that the autopsy found that Lambert "was tazed (sic) at distant contact range," and he had three punctures suggestive of Taser barbs on his right and left flanks.

The multitude of puncture marks indicates police Tasered her brother several times, Smalls adds.

"Linwood Lambert was unarmed and non-threatening at the time he was accosted by [police officers] who set in motion events and actions which lead (sic) to the death of Linwood Lambert," the complaint states.

The Virginia State Police's report says that results of its investigation were to be turned over to the commonwealth's attorney after completion.

The Bureau of Criminal Investigation has not returned a phone call seeking comment.

In addition to the town of South Boston, Smalls names as defendants Chief of Police James Binner and Deputy Chief Brian Lovelace, plus 30 Jane and John Doe officers.

Though Lovelace told the press Lambert died in custody after being disorderly and causing property damage, he never acknowledged that Lambert was Tasered, according to the complaint.

Lovelace knowingly made multiple misleading statements in an effort to justify the indefensible actions of the officers, Smalls alleges.

The officers responsible for Lambert's death routinely and excessively used Tasers on people from all walks of life, according to the complaint, which says South Boston has failed to ensure that its officers are properly trained and supervised, especially with regard to the use of Tasers.

South Boston police acknowledged that their Taser training and policies were insufficient after Lambert died, and amended their practices, according to Smalls' suit.

Smalls seeks punitive damages for wrongful death and other claims. She is represented by David Kopstein of Kopstein & Associates in Seabrook, Md., and Ramon Arreola of Messa & Associates in Philadelphia.

Kopstein's office directed questions to Arreola, who was out of his office Thursday. South Boston Police Chief James Binner has not returned a call requesting comment.

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