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Video shows N.J. police shoot at man accused of slashing an officer with knife

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New Jersey officials released video and audio Thursday of a violent encounter last month between a man experiencing an apparent mental crisis, Clifton police and a county SWAT team.

Antwan Whitlock, 35, of Union Township, allegedly slashed an officer with a knife late December, officials said. He was later hit with a Taser and stabbed himself in the chest, although he was not hit when officers fired at him, according to the state attorney general's office.

He remains in the hospital, officials said. An investigation into the incident remains ongoing.

Messages left with Clifton police and members of Whitlock's family were not immediately returned.

The state released video from two hotel surveillance cameras, two Tasers and audio from a pair of 911 calls.

Early morning Dec. 27, officers arrived at the Howard Johnson Inn on Route 3 West.

They were responding to a 911 call from Whitlock.

In the audio recording, Whitlock told the dispatcher he was at the Howard Johnson, but other information was difficult to hear because the connection was bad and some of his answers were bleeped out.

He did tell the dispatcher he needed an ambulance. He also said he was experiencing some form of "attack," but not a heart attack.

A little more than 90 seconds into the call, the dispatcher asked if Whitlock had trouble breathing. Whitlock grunted and stopped talking.

A few moments later, the line went dead.

The dispatcher called the hotel to say she was sending an ambulance.

Two Clifton cops walked up around 5:20 a.m to a fourth-floor room where Whitlock was staying. Another officer and EMTs from the local fire department also arrived, officials said.

A surveillance camera from the hallway showed three cops talking through what appears to be a closed door.

The officers eventually forced the door open, then backed up as Whitlock leaned his head into the hallway.

Whitlock's left hand held something shiny, and two officers drew their guns.

The cops talked with Whitlock for about a minute, according to the video, although the surveillance cameras did not capture audio. Whitlock had two knives, officials said.

One officer eventually holstered his gun, stepped forward and sprayed Whitlock in the face with OC Spray, according to the video and the attorney general's office.

Whitlock sprinted away. As he ran, he swung his right arm toward one of the officers, who immediately dropped to the carpet, clutching his face.

Clifton officers Kevin Berdnik and Sgt. David Roe drew 9mm guns and fired, according to the video, although officials said Whitlock was not shot. Whitlock disappeared at the end of the hallway.

The injured officer, who was not named, army crawled across the floor as other officers rushed to his side. He was later taken to St. Joseph's University Medical Center, treated and released, officials said.

Soon after, a different camera captured Whitlock wandering down a hallway, alone.

He swung his arm, rubbed his eye and appeared to be talking to himself before vanishing through a door.

More than an hour passed, according to the video timecode.

Whitlock then re-appeared through the same door, stopped at the end of the hall and waited. Two knives were visible in one hand.

Dressed in sneakers, sweatpants, a dark long-sleeved shirt and a do-rag, he paced for several minutes, and at one point appeared to spit on the carpet. He also placed the tip of a knife against his heart.

Around 7:06 a.m., a Passaic County SWAT team rounded the corner on the other end of the hall.

Whitlock did not flee as ten officers advanced wearing helmets and body armor.

"Get right on the ground, nobody's gonna hurt you bud," one officer said, according to audio from one of the Taser videos.

“Just drop the knife buddy,” another said.

Whitlock waved his hands in the air, but did not appear to say anything.

SWAT Officer Joseph DeGroot fired a Taser at Whitlock about two minutes later.

Whitlock fell to the floor, rolled onto his back, lifted up at least one knife with both hands and thrust it into his chest, according to the video.

Officers swarmed around, pulled his hands away and pinned him to the carpet.

In audio from the Taser, a man can be heard screaming while another man yells “drop it” and a dog barks in the background.

Whitlock was treated at the hotel and then taken to St. Joseph’s, where he underwent surgery, officials said. He remains in the hospital.

Whitlock was charged with second- and third-degree aggravated assault, third-degree resisting arrest and third-degree possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, according to a press release.

It was not immediately clear if he has a lawyer.