



5 of 13 DOCUMENTS

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NBC News Transcripts

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HEADLINE: Department of Justice and the FBI open investigation into the shooting death of Trayvon Martin

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BODY:

ANN CURRY, co-host:

But we begin with that federal investigation into the deadly shooting of an unarmed teenager in Florida. NBC's Lilia Luciano has details for us this morning.

Hey, Lilia, good morning to you.

LILIA LUCIANO reporting:

Good morning, Ann. Late last night the Department of Justice announced their civil rights division and the FBI, as well, have opened an investigation into the death of Trayvon Martin. That's sure to be welcome news to many in this community and now across the nation.

Group: (In unison) Arrest Zimmerman. Arrest Zimmerman now.

LUCIANO: Law students from across Florida demanded justice outside the prosecutor's office.

Unidentified Woman: We want an arrest now. We won't wait.

LUCIANO: They want George Zimmerman arrested for the deadly shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, as the teen walked through this gated community near Orlando three weeks ago. Zimmerman, a Neighborhood Watch volunteer, called 911 reporting, quote, "a suspicious-looking guy."

(Clip from 911 call)

Mr. GEORGE ZIMMERMAN: This guys looks like he's up to no good or he's on drugs or something. He's got his hands in his waistband and he's a black male.

Unidentified 911 Operator #1: Are you following him?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah.

Operator #1: OK, we don't need you to do that.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: But the two soon got into an altercation. Gunshots heard when another neighbor called 911.

(Clip from 911 call)

Unidentified Operator #2: Do you think he's yelling help?

Unidentified Caller: Yes.

Operator #2: All right, what is your...(gunshot)...number?

Caller: Just--there's gunshots.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: Martin was unarmed but Zimmerman told police he fired in self-defense. Martin's father told MSNBC's Reverend Al Sharpton that his son was targeted for his race.

Mr. TRACY MARTIN (Trayvon Martin's Father): The Sanford Police Department is trying to make George Zimmerman out to be the victim and the victim is clear, Trayvon Martin, who's dead in the grave.

LUCIANO: Zimmerman's friend and former watch volunteer Frank Taaffe says Martin may have been profiled, but Zimmerman is neither trigger happy nor a racist.

Mr. FRANK TAAFFE (Zimmerman's Friend): We've had eight burglaries. In the majority of the cases the perpetrators were young black male. So based on that there was a heightened sense of paranoia in our community.

LUCIANO: But Taaffe admits Zimmerman may have gone too far.

Mr. TAAFFE: He did go above and beyond with the use of deadly force. I, myself, probably would just carry pepper spray or a Taser.

LUCIANO: Police have now released more calls from Zimmerman revealing he had a history of reporting suspicious neighborhood activity.

(Clip from 911 call)

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: There was a break-in in my neighborhood recently and two youths that match the description of the people--they're back in the neighborhood.

Unidentified 911 Operator #3: Are they white, black or Hispanic?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: It's two black males in their late teens.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: The Department of Justice says in addition to the civil rights investigation, they are sending their community relations service to Sanford to try and relieve tensions among this community. George Zimmerman did not respond to requests from NBC News to comment. Ann:

CURRY: All right, NBC's Lilia Luciano, thank you so much.

It is now 7:05. Now here's Matt.

MATT LAUER, co-host:

All right, Ann, thanks very much.

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