



87 of 89 DOCUMENTS

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**HEADLINE:** Police report of Trayvon Martin's death leaked to media; Rachel Maddow speaks about current events and new book "Drift"

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**REPORTERS:** RON ALLEN, RACHEL MADDOW

**BODY:**

ANN CURRY, co-host:

New accounts of what happened on the night of Trayvon Martin's death have now surfaced, adding to the tension surrounding this case. NBC's Ron Allen is in Sanford, Florida, with more on this.

Hey, Ron, good morning.

**RON ALLEN reporting:**

Good morning to you, Ann. George Zimmerman's defenders say there was a life and death struggle that night, with Zimmerman bloodied and beaten and on the ground because of Trayvon Martin. It's a version of events that police say is, in fact, in the report that they've sent on to prosecutors now looking into this case, details that police also say have been confirmed by unidentified witnesses.

Reverend JESSE JACKSON: The whole world is watching Sanford today.

ALLEN: At an emotional city commission meeting, Trayvon Martin's parents made a passionate plea for George Zimmerman's arrest and prosecution.

Mr. TRACY MARTIN: For the Sanford Police Department to feel as though they were going to sweep another young black minority death under the rug, it's an atrocity.

ALLEN: One by one, civil rights activists warned Sanford, the entire world is watching.

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Reverend AL SHARPTON (MSNBC Host): For one man, would you risk the reputation of a whole city? Zimmerman is not worth the history of this city. You need to arrest him and redeem this city right now.

(Clip from 911 call)

Mr. GEORGE ZIMMERMAN: This guy looks like he's up to no good. He looks black.

Unidentified 911 Operator: Did you see what he was wearing?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah. A dark hoodie.

(End of clip)

ALLEN: This case drew national attention after 911 tapes were released from the night Zimmerman, a Neighborhood Watch volunteer, shot and killed Martin, an unarmed teenager.

(Clip from 911 call)

Operator: Are you following him?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah.

Operator: OK. We don't need you to do that.

(End of clip)

ALLEN: Police say there is a one-minute gap where they're not sure what happened. A published report confirmed by police says Zimmerman told investigators he was returning to his vehicle after losing sight of the teenager, when Martin struck first, from behind. According to Zimmerman, Martin asked, 'Do you have a problem?' When Zimmerman said no, Martin said, 'Well, you do now,' and punched him in the face, breaking his nose and then smashing Zimmerman's head against the sidewalk. The public police report says Zimmerman was treated for nose and head injuries.

Mr. JOE OLIVER (Friend of George Zimmerman): What's been released so far shows that it wasn't George who was the aggressor. It shows that it was Trayvon who was the aggressor.

ALLEN: A friend speaking out for Zimmerman says Zimmerman told him Martin was on top when Zimmerman shot him in self-defense.

Ms. SYBRINA FULTON: I know I cannot bring my baby back.

ALLEN: Martin's family insists police leaked details of Zimmerman's narrative to defend the decision not to arrest Zimmerman. Police officials admit the information may have been leaked and pledged to punish anyone who released it. The family also reacted angrily while confirming a report their son had been suspended from school for 10 days for possession of an empty marijuana bag. They dismissed it as irrelevant to the case.

Ms. FULTON: They've killed my son and now they're trying to kill his reputation.

Mr. MARTIN: Even in death, they are still disrespecting my son.

Mr. FRANK TAAFFE: Nobody's disrespecting his son. But we sure are disrespecting George.

ALLEN: Frank Taaffe, a Neighborhood Watch volunteer along with Zimmerman, says police did a thorough investigation, and Zimmerman was only looking out for his neighbors when he followed Martin.

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Mr. TAAFFE: We've been robbed eight times in the last 15 months. George just wanted to know, what are you doing here?

ALLEN: Martin's family says the problem with all that is that police accepted Zimmerman's statements at the scene as fact and never gathered any more evidence that might reveal what really happened then. All this now goes before a grand jury, while there's every indication the protests and the demand for justice will continue. Matt:

MATT LAUER, co-host:

All right. Ron Allen on this story for us. Ron, thanks very much.

Rachel Maddow is the host of "The Rachel Maddow Show" on MSNBC and the author of the new book "Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power."

Rachel, welcome back, good to see you.

RACHEL MADDOW reporting:

Thanks, Matt.

LAUER: Let's stick on Trayvon Martin for a second before I get to your book and talk about how the case has become part of the public consciousness. Some prominent Republicans criticized President Obama when he made the comment, quote, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon." They say that the president injected politics and race into the issue. I think race was injected from the very beginning.

MADDOW: Yeah.

LAUER: But politically speaking, did President Obama make a mistake commenting, weighing in on it?

MADDOW: You know, I think in moments of national upset, and there is real emotional weight to this issue, I think a president's role is to say, America's institutions work and they need to work and our leaders are on the side of them working better. So for him to say, 'My son would look like Trayvon, if I had a son,' is him saying, 'This case will not be swept under the rug. There will be no immunity from prosecution because of the race of the victim,' which is the worry, the suspicion, and the accusation of many people who are very concerned about this case. I think that is a sticking up for American institutions kind of line. I don't think it was particularly racial. But I understand his critics are going to go after him no matter what he said.

LAUER: Let's move over to what's happening at the Supreme Court today.

MADDOW: Yeah.

LAUER: Second day of oral arguments over the president's health care reform law. If it is struck down by the Supreme Court, talk to me about how that affects November. And then take it the other way, if it's upheld by the Supreme Court.

MADDOW: The most interesting thing that I have seen about this in terms of how it's going to affect the public is that Bloomberg did some polling on it and Bloomberg's poll found that 75 percent of people think that the Supreme Court will decide based on their political beliefs, not on the law. So this is as--this may as much be a referendum on the Supreme Court, and whether or not the Roberts court is so conservatively politicized that it will make a decision to hurt the president, rather than sticking closely to precedent in this case.

LAUER: If they don't, though, if they uphold this law, what's the effect on the president come re-election time in November?

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MADDOW: I don't actually think it will have that much of an effect if it is upheld. I mean, I realize that the partisans who have--the people who have made this about partisan politics think that it will be the end all-be all for the election. But if what the Republicans call Obama Care is upheld, then the president has still reformed health care and Republicans still hate it and we're back to where we are now.

LAUER: This open mike issue, OK, happened yesterday. The president speaking to the Russian president, said on all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this can be solved, but it's important for him, Putin, to give me space. Yeah, I understand, replied the Russian president. I understand your message about space and then President Obama said, this is my last election. After my election, I have more flexibility.

MADDOW: Yeah.

LAUER: Why shouldn't people think this is a disingenuous stand on foreign policy?

MADDOW: Well, what they're talking about is missile defense. And what he's saying is we're probably not going to make any further agreements or have any better--we're going--we're not going to make much progress in terms of talking about missile defense while I am in an election year.

LAUER: But it adds to the cynicism that people have.

MADDOW: Yeah.

LAUER: That they say our leaders should take a stand on principle, not political vulnerability.

MADDOW: But the issue with arms control and the Russians is that the agreements that the president has been making with the Russians, the Senate will not follow, the Congress will not follow. And so if you want to be realistic about it, the Congress and the Senate, in particular, is not going to follow him in an election year. So it's a little bit of a window into real politic and the way these guys really talk to each other. I don't think we learned anything new. But it's kind of interesting to see two leaders, you know, speaking unguardedly.

LAUER: From your book, you write, "When civilians are not asked to pay any price, it's easy to be at war--not just to intervene in a foreign land in the first place, but to keep on fighting there." Compare the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for me, and the price people like me and citizens of this country have been asked to price with past wars and what's been the impact.

MADDOW: I think what I--what I wrote "Drift" about and what I think has happened is that we made a series of political decisions over the past 30 or 40 years that essentially made war less hassle. It--we gave presidents ways to go around the Congress trying to block them. We gave the American public sort of some blinders to put on in terms of seeing the cost of things. We've shielded ourselves from casualties. We've bolstered the ranks of the deployed with private contractors. We're not even often allowed to know when private contractors are hurt or killed. All of these ways that have sort of made it more comfortable for us. And so we've ended up, after all of those changes, with the longest war in American history and an eight-and-a-half-year second war fought alongside of it. And the American people not even really much noticing when that eight-and-a-half-year-long war in Iraq ended. Oh, was that still going on? You know, we didn't have a parade here in New York. There's no real civilian effect of it and that is something--that civilian distance from our war fighting I think is new.

LAUER: Real quickly, is that system here to stay? Or are there simple ways to change it so that there's more of a realization?

MADDOW: There are simple ways to change it. I mean, what I found in the book and the reason I wrote it is because I think the decisions that got us here so that we're so insulated from the war as civilians, were simple decisions made not over a huge amount of time, only about 30 or 40 years since Vietnam. They can all be reversed. We don't need

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a secret military, we don't need a private military, and we need to have a big, robust debate when we are thinking about using force so we're all connected and it's not the military fighting our wars, it's the country fighting our war.

LAUER: Rachel Maddow, it's always nice to have you here, Rachel.

MADDOW: Thanks, Matt. Thanks for having me.

LAUER: Thanks very much.

It's 15 minutes--and by the way, you can watch Rachel's show weeknights at 9 Eastern and Pacific time on MSNBC. And a programming note, tomorrow on TODAY, we'll have an exclusive interview with House Speaker John Boehner. We'll talk to him about the presidential race, his agenda in Congress and more. That's tomorrow here on TODAY.

Once again, here's Ann.

CURRY: Matt, thanks.

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