



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on March 28, 2018

Louisiana Atty. Gen.: No Charges Against Officers in Shooting Death of Alton Sterling

Louisiana's attorney general announced Tuesday that no charges will be brought against the two white police officers involved in the fatal shooting of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge in July 2016. The decision for the state not to bring charges comes nearly 11 months after the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) came to the same conclusion.



The shooting happened in the wee hours between July 4 and 5, 2016 and was immediately branded as evidence of "systemic racism." Sterling was black and both officers are white. But Sterling was illegally armed and was reaching for his gun when he was shot. The liberal mainstream media — in their haste to prove racism — began referring to Sterling as a "gentle giant" who was unjustifiably killed by two white officer for the "crime" of being black.

That narrative was not only not supported by the facts, it was directly contradicted by them. And those facts were known almost immediately. Unfortunately, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) crowd was far more interested in promoting an agenda than knowing the truth.

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As this writer [reported](#) right after the shooting, police were called to a convenience store that night because a homeless man had reported that a person selling CDs and DVDs had threatened him with a gun. When they arrived, Officers Howie Lake and Blane Salamoni saw Sterling selling CDs and DVDs in the parking lot. He matched the description of the person who had pulled a gun on the homeless man.

The officers ordered Sterling to place his hands on the hood of a car so they could search him. He refused and struggled with the officers. He was tazed, but continued to struggle. When the fight went to the ground, both officers attempted to subdue Sterling, but he refused to comply and repeatedly reached for his gun. Officer Salamoni shot Sterling and was then thrown off him. When Sterling attempted to get up, he was again shot multiple times and died.

A toxicology report showed that Sterling had illegal drugs in his system at the time. That may explain his ability to shrug off the tazer and continue fighting. It may also explain his actions, though committing violent criminal acts and fighting police officers were not new to Sterling.

Sterling had a [long criminal record](#) ranging from violent crimes (including domestic battery, robbery, illegal possession of a firearm, and armed assault), to drug dealing, to failure to pay child support, to carnal knowledge of a juvenile for impregnating a 14-year-old girl when he was 20. For that last-



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mentioned crime he was sentenced to five years hard labor, although the sentence was suspended on the condition that he honor his probation agreement and register as a sex offender. He did not keep those conditions and was subsequently sentenced to two and a half years in prison. Upon his release, he was added to the [sex offender registry](#).

He had been in and out of jail for more than half of his life.

Furthermore, Sterling was well known to local police as a dangerous criminal. In one previous altercation with an officer, he refused a pat-down and fought with the officer. During the fight, a loaded pistol fell from his pocket. That officer managed to subdue Sterling and secure the weapon without further incident. Sterling apparently did not learn from that incident, since in his last encounter with police he was illegally armed (felons cannot legally own guns) and fought with the officers.

Sterling apparently did not learn anything from that encounter, because — as not [one](#), but [two](#), mobile phone videos show — he again wrestled with police, refused orders, and was carrying a gun in his pocket — a gun he tried to draw on those officers. His death at the hands of those officers — while tragic — was his own doing, not theirs. After the shooting, the officers retrieved a loaded revolver from Sterling's pocket — as can clearly be seen in the videos.

After the DOJ spent nearly a year investigating the shooting, it announced on May 2, 2017, that it would not charge either of the officers involved because there was no evidence that the officers acted unreasonably and willfully. However, the state of Louisiana began its own investigation into the shooting.

Now Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry has announced that — based on all of the evidence, including that compiled by the DOJ, opinions issued by independent experts, and statements given by eyewitnesses — neither Officer Howie Lake nor Officer Blane Salamoni will be charged in the death of Sterling. Their actions were not unreasonable and did not violate either the law or Sterling's rights.

But, as before, the officers are not out of the woods just yet.

Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul has announced that his office will conduct a disciplinary hearing this week and plans to conclude that process by Friday. Then, he plans to release all the videos of the shooting that have not yet been released. Those include the surveillance video from the convenience store and both officers' body cameras.

An attorney for Salamoni said it is "grossly unfair" to hold a disciplinary hearing so soon after the conclusion of the criminal investigation. It is expected that — for political reasons — the officers will be fired as a result of that hearing.

L. Chris Stewart, an attorney representing two of Sterling's five children (by multiple women, including the young girl Sterling was convicted of impregnating when she was 14), said the decision not to bring criminal charges was "biased." He was critical of the inclusion of Sterling's long and violent criminal record in the report, saying it had nothing to do with the case. He added, "They kept making Alton look like a criminal."

In reality, it was Sterling himself — by his longtime criminal behavior — that made him "look like a criminal." In short, he looked like one because he was one. What else would one call a man who did all the things Sterling did?

Stewart may have his own motives for muddying the waters of an otherwise clear case of the police simply doing their jobs. In June 2017, he and other lawyers representing Sterling's children filed a



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wrongful death lawsuit against the city of Baton Rouge, its police department and former police chief, and the two officers involved in the shooting.

If the city fires officers Lake and Salamoni, it will be essentially offering them up as scapegoats in the wrongful death suit.

Considering that in the immediate wake of the shooting, riots and violent protests broke out in Baton Rouge that eventually caused [the deaths of three police officers and the serious injury of three others](#), the state's decision not to bring charges could rekindle the fires of racial violence. BLM may have another moment of violent glory as it continues to make another dangerous criminal the poster child of its rhetoric.

Rather than disciplining — and possibly firing — two good officers, Baton Rouge should focus its attention on keeping the peace in what may prove to be another troubling season for the embattled city. After all, the officers have been cleared in every investigation. They simply did their jobs. America needs police officers like them. Baton Rouge may need them in the coming days and weeks.

Photo from video showing Officers Blane Salamoni and Howie Lake attempting to restrain Alton Sterling: AP Images





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