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Troopers exonerated in 2002 traffic stop

Attorney General's Office review finds 'no excessive use of force'

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Attorney General Peter Harvey has determined that three state troopers used appropriate force during a 2002 traffic stop that is now the focus of a federal civil lawsuit accusing them of beating a motorist while he was handcuffed.

The lawsuit contends Troopers Robert Parry, Frederick Fife and Craig Brown violated the civil rights of Aundrey Green by using excessive force during a traffic stop along a Cumberland County highway on April 22, 2002. Green, 32, suffered cuts to his head and body that required him to be hospitalized.

Harvey ordered his Office of State Police Affairs to review the incident after Green filed a lawsuit last January that claimed a State Police videotape showed the troopers punching and kicking him, and striking him with a flashlight.

The review, which included having the tape converted to a digital format and enhanced so authorities could look at the footage frame by frame, concluded the troopers' use of force was appropriate, said Paul Loriquet, a spokesman for the Attorney General's Office.

Loriquet declined to describe what the videotape shows because the matter is still being litigated.

However, he said, referring to the Office of State Police Affairs, "they found no excessive use of force and they concurred with the findings of the (State Police) internal investigation, which showed no excessive use of force."

Green's attorney, Vincent Sanzone, called Harvey's ruling "disgraceful."

"If they consider that a reasonable use of force, then I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end (of unreasonable force)," Sanzone said. "I'm looking forward to a time when a jury looks at this tape and tells the attorney general he doesn't know what he's talking about."

A trial date has not been set for the lawsuit, which will be heard in U.S. District Court in Camden. The "discovery" portion of the case, when both sides exchange pertinent facts or documents, ended yesterday.

"Those three guys didn't do anything wrong," said David Jones, president of the State Troopers Fraternal Association, the union that represents the officers. "If you just look at the entire tape, it exonerates them. What started out as a Rodney King has basically fallen of the face of the earth"

State Police Capt. Albert Della Fave said he hoped the attorney general's ruling would prove to be the definitive word on the controversy.

"The investigation has run its course and once again there was insufficient evidence and the troopers did their job," Della Fave said.

The troopers said they pulled over Green's blue Chevrolet Cavalier after he raced past them at more than 105 mph. They placed him under arrest after Green gave them a fake name and the altercation began when Green threatened to urinate in the rear seat of the police cruiser in which he had been placed.

The troopers contend they fought with Green only after he slipped out of his handcuffs and threw punches at them when they tried to remove him from the car. But Sanzone said there is no indication on the tape Green either resisted arrest or slipped out of the handcuffs.

Green later pleaded guilty to assaulting the troopers and served 11 months in state prison, although Sanzone said his client was given bad advice in accepting a plea deal on the charges.

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