

Top Police

Review of SFXaminer Slaying

Police Chief Donald Scott today brought the top members of his department into the investigation of the slaying of a black burglary suspect by a policeman in Hunters Point Tuesday.

Meeting with the Chief were Deputy Chief William Keays, chief of inspectors Charles Barca, homicide chief Charles Ellis, supervising Captain Jeremiah Taylor, and personnel director George Emil.

All spent the morning at the Police Academy, where they reviewed training demonstrating for recruits how to make stops of suspect autos, how to handcuff prisoners, and how to search them.

Scott Silent

The question at issue is whether Patrolman Richard Lewis followed the correct procedures when he halted Clarence Johnson, 32, in an incident that resulted in Johnson's death.

Scott refused to comment on the deliberations of his key aides, except to say that every aspect of the case is under investigation.

Mayor Alioto, in his first comment on the shooting, praised both Chief Scott and District Attorney John Ferdon as men of "very high, proven integrity."

"I believe their investigations will be fair, impartial and extensive, and will determine the truth of this case," he said.

"Until the results of those investigations are complete,

—Turn to Page 12, Col. 1

—From Page 1

it is not proper for any of us to pronounce judgment on what happened during this unfortunate incident."

NAACP Demand

He added a hope that the investigation could be conducted "free from political pressure."

The NAACP chapter here has asked U.S. Attorney James Browning to call the FBI into the probe, bluntly charging that Johnson was "cold bloodedly murdered."

"We have no confidence that local police will deal with this matter," declared NAACP acting president Benjamin Criswell and attorney Benjamin D. James Jr. in their wire to Browning.

'Whitewash'

They charged at a press conference later that the preliminary police version "already smelled of a whitewash" and that some 20 witnesses interviewed by them and other black community leaders called it "plain murder."

The initial police version was that Johnson, who had been ordered to place his hands on the roof of an auto and spreadeagle his legs, had turned and his elbow moved toward the officer's hand holding the gun, a .41 Magnum.

The officer, according to the preliminary report, brought up the gun to block the suspect's elbow and it discharged, the bullet striking Johnson on the back of his head.

Witnesses

Criswell said witnesses told him and others that Johnson had said something to the officer and that the officer then backed off and fired.

Asked whether the witnesses had talked to the investigating officer of the homicide and internal affairs units, Criswell snapped:

"I'm not about to expose

witnesses to harassment. I know they'd be afraid to have their names and addresses known at this time."

Deputy Chief Keays, who urged all persons witnessing the tragic incident to come forward, said he investigation will bring out all the facts.

'Not Murder'

"It wasn't deliberate or cold-blooded murder," he said. "But until we get the whole thing together, we can't make any judgment."

The investigation, he said, will be "an objective one right down the middle" by the professionals of his department.

Keays pointed out that the findings will be reviewed by him, then by Chief Scott, then the Police Commission and the District Attorney's office.

Asked whether he wasn't prejudging the incident as murder, Criswell said:

"What else is it? A man was shot in the back of his head."

Johnson, the father of two children, was a handyman in the area and was also known as Clarence Ellis Jr.

Officer Lewis, 28, has received three commendations since joining the force in March, 1966.

Criswell and James said they not only had no confidence in the local police investigation but also the one initiated by Mayor Alioto in appointing two aides to look into it.