

GBI report: 'Particles characteristic of gunshot primer residue' found on activist's hands



Caption

Credit: Ben Gray

NEWS

By **Jeremy Redmon**, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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Manuel Teran was killed during confrontation with law enforcement at training center site

"Particles characteristic of gunshot primer residue" were found in samples taken from the hands of an activist Georgia State Patrol troopers killed at the site of Atlanta's planned public safety training center on Jan. 18, according to a Georgia Bureau of Investigation report.

Produced five days after Manuel “Tortuguita” Teran was killed, the report says the findings support the possibility that Teran “discharged a firearm, was in close proximity to a firearm upon discharge, or came into contact with an item whose surface bears” gunshot primer residue.

The report adds: “It should be noted that it is possible for victims of gunshot wounds, both self-inflicted and non-self-inflicted, to have” such residue on their hands.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution obtained the report from the DeKalb County Medical Examiner’s Office Tuesday. Last week, that office released an [autopsy](#) that said gunpowder residue was “not seen” on Teran’s hands. But that is not conclusive because gunpowder is not always visible to the naked eye. The autopsy also said Teran’s body had at least 57 gunshot wounds.

Teran’s family has disputed the GBI’s claim that Teran fired the first shot at troopers and has questioned the use of deadly force.

Weeks before Teran was killed, the state patrol’s SWAT team had been requested to assist the GBI and other law enforcement agencies in clearing the property of protesters who were “unlawfully occupying the land,” according to multiple Georgia Department of Public Safety use of force reports obtained by the AJC.

On the morning of Jan. 18, troopers began clearing the forest when they encountered dozens of tents, one of which belonged to Teran, the reports say. Teran was inside and briefly spoke to officers but refused to leave. Troopers then fired pepper balls inside the enclosure in an attempt to drive Teran out and make an arrest for criminal trespassing. The reports say Teran fired the first shot, wounding a trooper, and that six officers then returned fire.

The GBI has said that the bullet that struck the trooper had been fired from a gun found at the scene and provided documents showing it had been purchased by Teran in September 2020. Teran’s family disputes that and questions the veracity of the use of force reports submitted by troopers.

Jay Jarvis, who worked as a forensic scientist for the Georgia State Crime Laboratory for more than 30 years, said the GBI reports taken together confirm for him that Teran fired at the troopers. Being inside the tent, Jarvis added, would have prevented Teran from getting gunshot residue on his hands from the patrolmen firing at him.

“I would be 100% convinced that he is the one who fired the shot,” said Jarvis, who owns Armuchee-based Arma Forensics and who has testified as an expert witness in hundreds of court cases involving firearms. “The physical evidence is very conclusive in that regard.”

Attorneys representing Teran’s family did not immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday morning. But Teran’s mother, Belkis Teran, released a statement last week about the autopsy.

“We are devastated to learn that our child, our sweet Manny, was mercilessly gunned down by police and suffered 57 bullet wounds,” she said.

- AJC staff writers Rosana Hughes and Caroline Silva contributed to this report.

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