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## Bellaire Police Officer Jeffrey Cotton Charged

April 7, 2009 | Grant Scheiner

The New York Times reports that local police officer Jeffrey Cotton has been charged in the shooting of Robert Tolan. This story has made nationwide news and has even been the subject of an episode of Real Sports by Bryant Gumbel.

Jeffrey Cotton has an arraignment setting in the 232nd District Court of Harris County, Texas. Cotton was indicted on April 6, 2008 for Aggravated Assault by a Public Servant. This charge is a First Degree Felony and Mr. Cotton faces 5 years to 99 years and/or up to a \$10,000 fine.

Most people know the story. Robert Tolan, 23 year old black male was driving his own car to his parents home in an affluent, predominately white neighborhood. For whatever reason Bellaire Police began to follow him and ran his license. The officers misread the license plate by one digit and the car came up as stolen. When Tolan pulled into his driveway, police approached him with guns drawn. Hearing the commotion, his parents came outside in their pajamas. Robert father, Bobby Tolan, a former major league baseball player, tried to explain to the officers that Robert was his son and this was his residence. Furthermore, Bobby explained that it was his car his son was driving. Bobby is forced against his vehicle. Meanwhile, Robert and his cousin are on the ground as ordered by the police. At some point, the officer grabs Mrs. Tolan and pushes her against the garage. Robert Tolan stands up and says, "get your fucking hands off my mom."

This is when the shot rings out. Robert Tolan received a single gun shot wound to his stomach. Disgustingly, the officer put Tolan's parents in the back of separate police vehicles while EMS attended to Tolan.

So here we are. I think the Bellaire Officer is going to have a tough time justifying his actions. There is no excuse for shooting a man in his own front yard in front of his family, absent a threat of deadly force.

This whole story stinks. The police had no reason to run the license plate in the first place absent a traffic infraction or some suspicious reason, other than the color of the occupant's skin, that drew the officer's attention. Furthermore, when the owner of the residence tells you its his son and the family's car, the guns should go back into the holsters. That would have been a good time to apologize to the Tolan family, not shoot their son.

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