

'Swatting' prank led to fatal police shooting of unarmed Kansas man



A 28-year-old man in Wichita, Kan., was shot and killed by police responding to a report of a shooting and hostage situation at a residence. (Fernando Salazar / Associated Press)

By **Associated Press**

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Police and the FBI are investigating whether an argument over an online game prompted a hoax call that led to a house where an officer shot and killed a Kansas man who apparently wasn't involved in the dispute.

Wichita Deputy Police Chief Troy Livingston on Friday blamed a "prankster" who called 911 and made up a story about a shooting and kidnapping. He did not mention reports that an argument over online gaming was at the heart of the prank, although he said investigators had made good progress tracking online leads.

Police have not disclosed the name of the man who was killed Thursday evening, but

relatives identified him as Andrew Finch, 28.

Livingston, speaking at a news conference, said the hoax call was a case of "swatting," in which a person makes up a false report to get a SWAT team to descend on an address.

"Due to the actions of a prankster we have an innocent victim," Livingston said. He said no one has been arrested in connection with the hoax.

Police played [audio of the call to 911](#). A man said his father had been shot in the head. He said he was holding his mother and a sibling at gunpoint. The caller, speaking with relative calm, said he poured gasoline inside the home "and I might just set it on fire."

Several officers arrived and surrounded the home, braced for a hostage situation. When Finch went to the door police told him to put his hands up and move slowly.

But Livingston said the man moved a hand toward the area of his waistband — a common place where guns are concealed. An officer, fearing the man was reaching for a gun, fired a single shot. Finch died a few minutes later at a hospital. Livingston said Finch was unarmed.

The officer, a seven-year veteran of the department, is on paid leave pending the investigation.

The Finch family on Friday allowed reporters inside their home. Lisa Finch told them her son was not a gamer.

"What gives the cops the right to open fire?" she asked. "That cop murdered my son over a false report in the first place."

Lisa Finch said the family was forced outside barefoot in freezing cold and handcuffed after the shooting. She said her granddaughter was forced to step over her dying uncle and that no guns were found in the home.

Dexerto, an online news service focused on gaming, reported that the series of events began with an online argument over a \$1 or \$2 wager in a "Call of Duty" game on UMG Gaming, which operates online tournaments including one involving "Call of Duty."

"We woke this morning to horrible news about an innocent man losing his life," UMG

spokeswoman Shannon Gerritzen said in an email to The Associated Press. "Our hearts go out to his loved ones. We are doing everything we can to assist the authorities in this matter." She declined to disclose other details.

In addition to the 911 call, police also released a brief video of body camera footage from another officer at the scene. It was difficult to see clearly what happened.

The FBI estimates that roughly 400 cases of swatting occur annually, with some using caller ID spoofing to disguise their number. An FBI supervisor in Kansas City, Missouri, which covers all of Kansas, said the agency joined in the investigation at the request of local police.

In other cases of apparent swatting, three families in Florida in January had to evacuate their homes after a detective received an anonymous email claiming bombs had been placed at the address.

A 20-year-old Maryland man was shot in the face with rubber bullets by police in 2015 after a fake hostage situation was reported at his home.

Rep. Katherine Clark, a Massachusetts Democrat, introduced an anti-swatting bill in 2015 — then was herself the victim of swatting. Armed officers in 2016 responded to an anonymous call claiming an active shooter was at Clark's home.

UPDATES:

10 p.m.: This article was updated with additional details.

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