

Yuendumu: Police planned to ‘grab up’ Kumanjayi Walker



Zachary Rolfe leaves Darwin Supreme Court on Thursday.

- Amos Aikman
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On The Night Kumanjayi Walker Died, Zachary Rolfe And His Police Rapid Response Team Drove Around Yuendumu Trying To “Grab Up” The Aboriginal Teenager, Even Though Their Superiors Had A Plan To Arrest Him Safely The Next Morning, A Court Has Heard.

The Decorated 30-Year-Old Northern Territory Police Constable Is Facing Murder Charges Over The Shooting Death Of 19-Year-Old Walker In The Outback Community In 2019.

Constable Rolfe Shot Walker Three Times After The Latter Stabbed Him With Scissors During An Arrest Gone Wrong.

Crown Prosecutors Say Shots Two And Three Amounted To Murder, Whereas The First Shot, Fired 2.6 Seconds Earlier, Might Have Been Self-Defence.

Earlier This Week, The Jury Was Shown Footage Of Walker Attacking Two Yuendumu-Based Police With An Axe. Walker Was Wanted For Breaching A Court Order, And Had Returned To Yuendumu To Attend A Funeral.

The Officer In Charge At Yuendumu, Sergeant Julie Frost, Told The Court She Called In Constable Rolfe’s Immediate Response Team Because She Lacked The Resources To Arrest Walker Herself; Local Police Involved In The “Axe Incident” Could Not

Participate Because Of Conflicts Of Interest And Others Were Elsewhere Dealing With An Outbreak Of Unrest.

“So That Left Just You?” Prosecutor Philip Strickland Sc Asked. “Me,” She Replied.

Yuendumu Medical Staff Were Preparing To Flee The Community Of About 800 Over Safety Fears Related To A Spate Of Break-Ins. Sergeant Frost’s Staff Were To Be Asked To Accompany Any Relief Medical Workers On Call-Outs.

She Told The Court She Issued Internal Electronic Police Warnings That Walker Might Use Violence, Try To Evade Arrest And Could Be Suicidal. She Appealed To Walker’s Relatives To Get Him To Hand Himself In But Also Asked For A Dog Handler And The Irt To Be Sent From Alice Springs In Case He Did Not.

“I Believed They (The Irt) Had A Higher Level Of Training In Relation To High-Risk Apprehensions,” She Said. “Kumanjayi Had Run From Police ... And A Dog Unit Is Considered A Safe Option ... An Early Morning Arrest ... Is A Far Safer Time To Arrest People. It Gives The Element Of Surprise.”

Sergeant Frost Testified That On The Evening Of November 9, 2019, She Ordered The Irt To Conduct “High-Visibility Patrols” And Handle Any Call-Outs While She And Her Partner Had A Well-Earned Rest. Walker Was To Be Arrested At 5am On Sunday, With The Help Of A Local Officer Who Knew The Community And Walker’s Family.

It Appears She And Some Of The Irt Did Not Get Along. “It Appeared He Was Trying To Take Over The Conversation And Would Not Listen To Me,” She Said Of Irt Member James Kirstenfeldt.

The Jury Has Been Shown Excerpts From Constable Rolfe’s Bodyworn Video Recorded On The Night, In Which He Can Be Heard Asking Yuendumu Residents Where To Find Walker And Telling Them, “We’re Here To Grab Up Arnold (Walker’s First Name)”.

The Irt Was Armed With A Beanbag Shotgun And Ar-15 Assault Rifle. When A Woman Asked Constable Rolfe’s Partner, Adam Eberl, Why They Were Carrying A Large Gun, He Said “Someone Probably Shouldn’t Run At Police With An Axe”.

Constables Rolfe And Eberl Encountered Walker At His Adoptive Grandmother’s House About 7:30pm. Constable Rolfe Shot Walker Less Than A Minute Later

The Trial Continues.