

# Former deputy charged in killing of Black man in Fla.

**Brad Brooks**

REUTERS

A former Florida sheriff's deputy was charged on Friday with manslaughter in the shooting death of a Black man who responded to a knock on his apartment door, prosecutors said.

Former Deputy Eddie Duran, who was previously fired by the Okaloosa County sheriff, was charged in the May 3 killing of Air Force airman Roger Fortson, 23, in Fort Walton Beach, state prosecutor Greg Marcille said by phone. Authorities issued a warrant for his arrest on Friday.

Body camera video from Duran, who was responding to a domestic violence call, showed he banged on Fortson's apartment door unannounced. The deputy followed up with more loud knocks and twice said he was with the sheriff's department.

The video showed Fortson opening the door and holding a handgun at his side, pointed down. He did not point the gun at the deputy. Duran immediately opened fire multiple times at close range. Fortson later died in a local hospital.

Duran, who faces up to 30 years in prison if convicted, could not immediately be reached for comment, and it was not clear if an attorney was representing him.

Ben Crump, a prominent civil rights attorney who is representing Fortson's family, said in a written statement that this was a first step toward justice.

"Nothing can ever bring Roger back, and our fight is far from over, but we are hopeful that this arrest and these charges will result in real justice for the Fortson family," Crump said.

Fortson's family insists that the sheriff's deputy mistakenly targeted Fortson's apartment. They have pointed out that he was talking on the phone with his girlfriend before the shooting and nobody else was inside of the apartment.

An investigation by the Okaloosa



**Chantemekki Fortson, center, mother of Roger Fortson, listens as attorney Ben Crump, left, speaks in Atlanta on June 3. A former Florida deputy was charged in the May 3 killing of Roger Fortson.** ALYSSA POINTER/REUTERS FILE

County Sheriff's Office found that someone from the apartment complex called a non-emergency sheriff's department phone line to report that they heard a couple fighting in Fortson's apartment.

Crump, the family's attorney, has said Fortson was on a Facetime call with his girlfriend when he heard a knock on his door. He asked, "Who is it?" but did not get a response, Crump said, relating the girlfriend's account.

Fortson then retrieved a gun he owned legally and walked back through his living room toward the door, Crump said.

The killing was reminiscent of an unannounced police raid in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2020, when police burst into the apartment of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who was an emergency medical technician, killing her. Police had obtained a "no knock" warrant to raid the apartment, mistaking it for the home of a suspect.

On Friday, a federal judge agreed to dismiss part of the most serious charge against two former police officers who faced charges in Taylor's killing.

Taylor's death, along with the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police weeks later, set off a worldwide wave of protests against racism in law enforcement in the summer of 2020.