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Florida Traffic Stop Sparks Outrage After Viral Video Shows Police Force

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A police encounter in Jacksonville, Florida, has reignited scrutiny over law enforcement tactics after a viral video surfaced showing officers forcefully removing and striking a 22-year-old man during a February traffic stop. The incident, now under criminal investigation, has prompted concern from civil rights advocates and renewed calls for transparency in police procedures.

The video, recorded by the driver, William McNeil Jr., begins with him calmly speaking to an officer from the driver's seat of his parked car. McNeil questions the need to have his headlights on during daylight and requests to speak with a supervisor. Tension escalates quickly when one officer signals to break the car window, receiving a green light from a colleague who replies, "All right, go for it." Moments later, McNeil's window is shattered, and officers can be seen punching him in the face before pulling him from the vehicle and restraining him on the ground.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff TK Waters, acknowledged the use of force in the arrest. "Yes, there absolutely was force used by the arresting officers, and yes, that force is ugly," Waters stated during a press conference, as reported by Cable News Network (CNN). He continued, "Just because force is ugly, it does not mean it's unlawful or contrary to policy." Sheriff Waters also criticized what he described as selective footage being used to push an anti-police narrative.

In contrast to the video, the arrest report filed by Officer D. Bowers failed to mention any punches thrown during the arrest. The report claims McNeil resisted orders and reached for a knife on the floor, a claim his attorneys strongly deny. "He simply asks for a supervisor, and then they break his window and beat him. Yet, somehow, the report failed to mention that," his legal team stated.

Additional footage from a police body-worn camera shows officers issuing multiple warnings before breaking the window. However, the bodycam does not capture the moment McNeil is struck, which is visible in the video he recorded himself. The Sheriff's Office noted that McNeil did not initially provide his recording to law enforcement, delaying the launch of a formal investigation, which officially began on July 20.

The case raises ongoing questions about police accountability and the importance of full and transparent reporting. While law enforcement maintains the actions were within policy, the public release of conflicting video footage continues to drive debate over the appropriate use of force during routine traffic stops.