



A Baltimore police officer accidentally recorded himself planting drugs at a crime scene

Seriously. This really happened.

Updated by German Lopez | [@germanrlopez](#) | [german.lopez@vox.com](#) | Jul 19, 2017, 4:24pm EDT

It's not especially rare to hear stories of a police officer abusing his power. But it is pretty rare to see a story in which the cop actually records himself doing it.

That's what seemed to happen in Baltimore recently, when a police officer appeared to accidentally record himself planting drugs at a crime scene. In the January 2017 video, reported by **Fox Baltimore**, officer Richard Pinheiro puts a bag of pills under some trash in an alley. He then walks to the street. He then switches on his camera, walks back to the alley, and acts like he just found the drugs for the first time.

Here's the crucial mistake that Pinheiro apparently made: He apparently didn't realize that body cameras often save the last 30 seconds of footage before they're manually activated. So all of that preparation for his big faux discovery was caught on tape.

"I'm going to check here," Pinheiro says as the camera is activated. "Hold on." He then walks to the scene and acts like he's looking around. Finally, he comes to the spot where he put the pills, picks them up, and says, "Yo!" The other officers appear to play along with his fake discovery, as if this is all routine and normal.

The defendant connected to the drugs was set to go trial this week. But according to **BuzzFeed**, the prosecutor dropped the charges after the defendant's public defender discovered and saw the video. (Although, in a troubling development, the prosecutor apparently used Pinheiro as an eyewitness in a separate case — even after learning of his misconduct in the video.)

The Baltimore Police Department said it's investigating the three officers in the video. One officer is suspended, and the other two are on administrative duty with no public contact.

In a press conference on Wednesday, Baltimore Police Commissioner Kevin Davis provided additional context for what happened. Davis cautioned that he had not reached any conclusions. But he showed evidence that drugs were found at the scene before. That, however, would not in any way justify planting evidence.

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.@CommishKDavis says allegation of planting drugs "as serious as it gets," and they're taking it seriously; video doesn't show whole story.

7:51 PM - 19 Jul 2017

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Police describing location under surveillance; exchange observed; motorist stopped w drugs; seller stopped w drugs; then yard searched.

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Video: "I want what you just bought, boss," officer says to motorist/alleged buyer. "This is your way of going home."

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2nd Video: Officer searching alleged seller in convenience store. "I got grass," he says (pot?). Police say pot and heroin found.

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3rd video: Multiple officers searching same backyard as featured in video OPD flagged. They find drugs, police say.

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.@CommishKDavis says he wanted to provide a broader picture to the public of what was occurring, but hasn't reached any conclusions.

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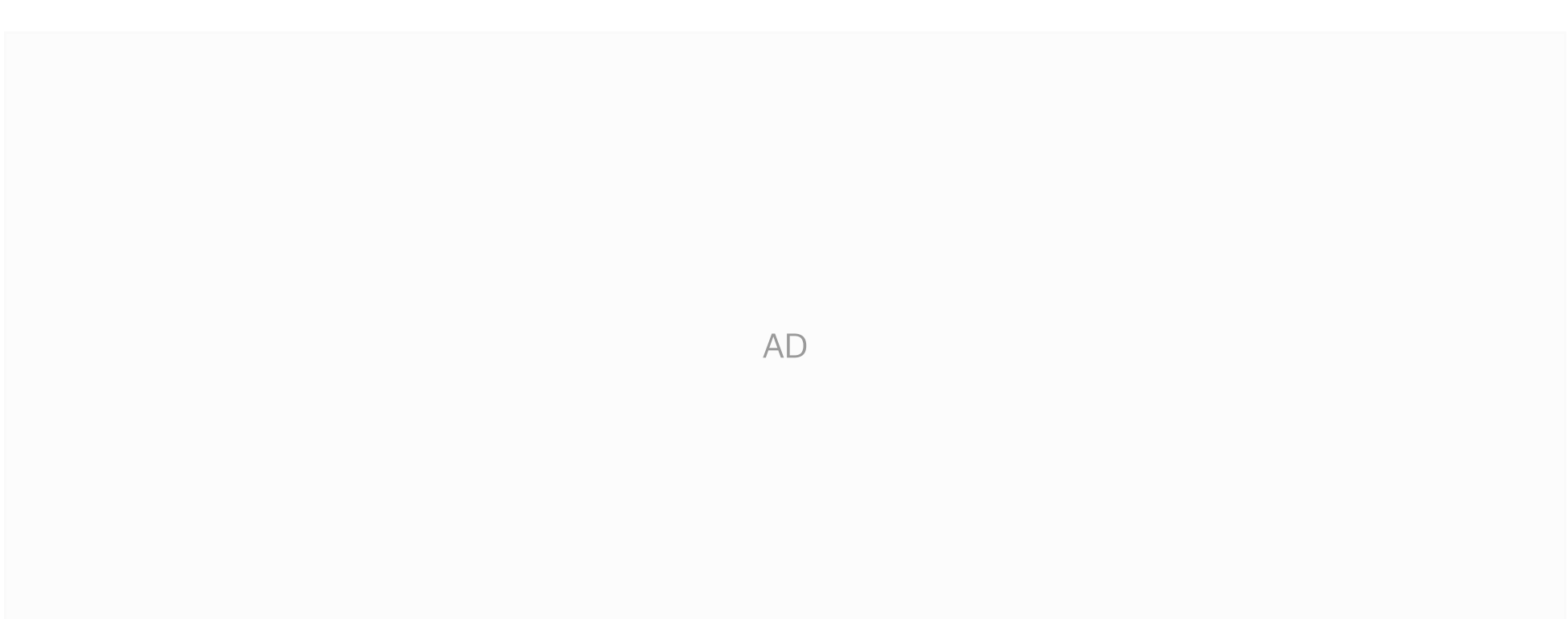
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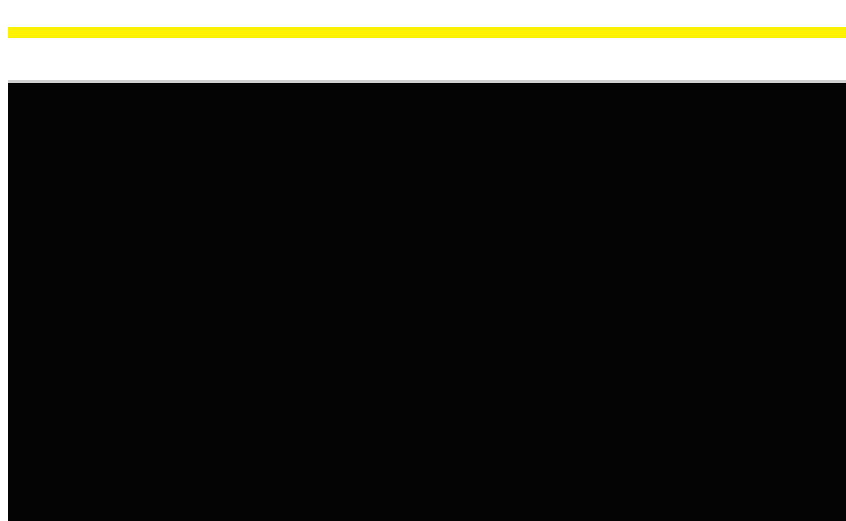




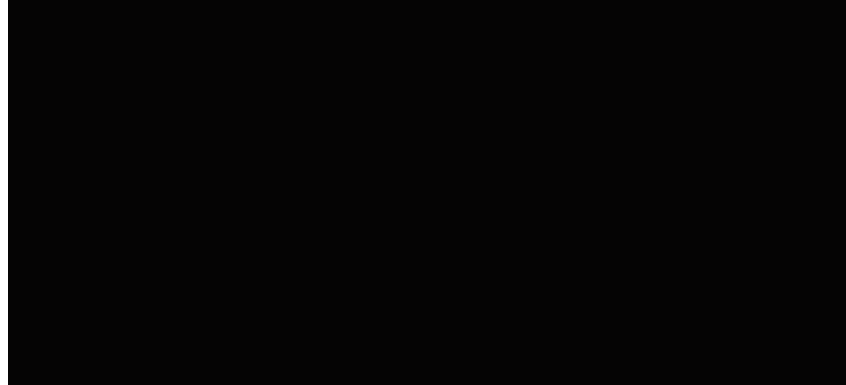
Body cameras don't always work out as many activists envisioned. Last week, the officer who shot **Justine Damond** in Minneapolis and his partner didn't turn on their cameras, leaving us in the dark about what exactly happened in the case. This week, prosecutors in Cincinnati **dropped charges** against former University of Cincinnati police officer Ray Tensing after two mistrials — even though body camera footage clearly showed that the man Tensing shot, **Samuel DuBose**, never posed a threat to him.

In this case, however, the body camera uncovered clear wrongdoing — and it led to a positive outcome for the defendant on trial.

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