

S.L. district attorney asks FBI to probe fatal police shooting

By [Annie Knox @anniebknox](#)

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FILE - District Attorney Sim Gill has asked federal investigators to review the fatal police shooting of a black man in Salt Lake City that has sparked outcry.

SALT LAKE CITY — Salt Lake County's top prosecutor has asked federal investigators to review the fatal police shooting of a black man in Salt Lake City that has sparked outcry.

District Attorney Sim Gill on Monday requested the FBI weigh in on the Aug. 13 death of Patrick Harmon, 50. Last Wednesday, Gill's office ruled the shooting justified.

Gill feels comfortable with his decision not to file criminal charges against the officer, but "it doesn't hurt" to bring on outside investigators, he said.

"Constructive scrutiny is a good thing."

Protesters with Black Lives Matter and other groups in Salt Lake City over the weekend called for Gill's resignation because of his ruling. Family members of Harmon, who was shot and killed after he ran from police, have said the officer should be fired and face criminal charges.

Police stopped Harmon for riding his bike across six lanes of a street in Salt Lake City without a light.

Body camera video shows he bolted from officers after they tried to apprehend him for an outstanding warrant.

Gill said the video when slowed down shows Harmon pivoted toward officers, and said he had a knife that was found at the scene.

The footage appears to show Harmon shot from behind after Salt Lake police officer Clinton Fox yelled "I'll (expletive) shoot you."

Salt Lake City Police Chief Mike Brown said through a spokesman Tuesday that he stands behind Fox and believes the FBI probe also will clear him of criminal wrongdoing.

Fox is back at work, but he's behind a desk and not on patrol as the Salt Lake City Police Department conducts its own investigation, Sgt. Brandon Shearer said. The FBI inquiry could prolong his return to the field, Shearer said.

The FBI has not yet opened a formal investigation. Sandra Barker, a spokeswoman for the agency, said the agency has been in contact with local authorities.

"If in the course of our assessment, information comes to light of a potential federal civil rights violation, the FBI is prepared to investigate," Barker said in a statement, noting that not every referral or complaint results in an investigation.

Outcry over Harmon's death was a factor but not the driving force in his request to the FBI, Gill said. He said protesters play an important role, but his decision stands.

Gill has sought reviews from the FBI in the past, including for officer-involved incidents. He couldn't recall if he had ever asked the agency to take a look at any shootings his office had ruled justified, he said.

He met Tuesday morning with Harmon's nephew, Lamar Ross, calling the meeting "open, candid and frank."

Ross said he felt better after speaking with the prosecutor. He came to understand in the meeting there wasn't enough evidence for a trial, he said, but he still wanted to see more scrutiny on what led to his uncle's death.

"We're going to be discussing with an attorney where we go from here," Ross said.