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NBC News Transcripts

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HEADLINE: Florida police questioning whether the shooting of a 17-year-old was self-defense or unjustified overreaction

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BODY:

LESTER HOLT, anchor:

Was it self-defense or an unjustified overreaction? That's the central question raised by the recent shooting of a 17-year-old teenager in Florida by a member of a Neighborhood Watch group. The shooter has not been arrested. And 911 recordings have just been released. We get the story from NBC's Lilia Luciano.

LILIA LUCIANO reporting:

Seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was walking to a family friend's home in a gated community in Sanford, Florida, when he was shot dead by a Neighborhood Watch captain. The shooter, George Zimmerman, called police because he says the teen looked, quote, "real suspicious."

Mr. GEORGE ZIMMERMAN: (From 911 call) This guy looks like he's up to no good.

LUCIANO: Zimmerman also told police the man was walking toward him with his hand in his waist band. Police told Zimmerman not to pursue the teen.

(Clip from 911 call)

911 Operator: Are you following him?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah.

Operator: OK, we don't need you to do that.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: He ignored the police and soon the two engaged in some sort of altercation. Several neighbors called 911.

Unidentified Caller #1: (From 911 call) And they're wrestling right in the back of my porch. The guy is yelling help and I'm not going outside.

LUCIANO: Then shots rang out.

(Clip from 911 call)

Operator: So you think he's yelling help?

Unidentified Caller #2: Yes.

Operator: All right, what is your...(gunshot).

Caller #2: There's gunshots.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: When police arrived they found Trayvon Martin facedown on the ground. He was only carrying a bag of Skittles, some money and a can of iced tea. Zimmerman was questioned but has not been arrested. He holds a license to carry a concealed weapon and claims he fired in self-defense. But the teen's family disputes that claim.

Ms. SYBRINA FULTON (Mother): That was my baby, and he was pleading for his life. And I just don't understand how that--how that's self-defense. You can clearly hear him yelling for help.

LUCIANO: Martin's family claims the shooting was a result of racial profiling and that local authorities are protecting Zimmerman, a 28-year-old white Hispanic.

Ms. NATALIE JACKSON (Martin Family Attorney): The issue of racial profiling started when George Zimmerman reported a suspicious person because Trayvon was black, walking slow and had a hoody on.

LUCIANO: Zimmerman's father disputed those claims in a letter to a local newspaper. Tonight Trayvon Martin's family is calling on the FBI to investigate. Lilia Luciano, NBC News, Miami.

HOLT: And up next, after 40 years why an American movie masterpiece endures.

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