

UK police trial vest-mounted cameras after killing

January 9 2014, by Raphael Satter

London's police force said Thursday it was rolling out vest-mounted video cameras to some of the capital's 2,300 firearms officers, hoping to help build public confidence after a contentious inquest verdict on a fatal shooting.

The announcement came a day after an inquest jury largely vindicated police officers over the fatal shooting of 29-year-old Mark Duggan, whose death triggered rioting across England more than two years ago.

The case, and its contested conclusion, raised familiar questions about whether armed police are too quick to shoot, and whether they can be held accountable if they are.

Speaking late Wednesday, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe said the camera experiment was an attempt to improve transparency and restore public trust in the force. It would allow jurors and judges literally to see events from an officer's perspective.

"We want to see if this is an effective way to record evidence and ensure public confidence," he said in a statement.

A police spokesman said Thursday that armed officers will begin wearing recording devices April 1. The number of officers set to wear the cameras has yet to be decided.

Police forces across the world have been experimenting with portable

cameras as tools for crime-fighting and police accountability. Cameras mounted on glasses, helmets, or vests are being trialed or distributed across the U.S. Several police forces across the U.K. are also trying out the devices.

Duggan's family reacted with anger to Wednesday's verdict that he was lawfully killed by police, even though he was unarmed when he was shot. The jury said the gang member had thrown a handgun from a taxi he was traveling in as it was stopped by police

The dead man's family said it would challenge the verdict in the courts, and plans to hold a vigil this weekend in the north London neighborhood where Duggan died.

Hogan-Howe said the family had the right "to register ... their protest about the outcome of the inquest."

"We will continue to talk to the family and others to keep our communications alive, and also to make sure, as I believe, that the protest will happen and that there won't be disorder," he said.

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