

Brief a

Law



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Melvin Washington vs. of Indiana Facts of the Case Police Officer Danny Reynolds, who works for the Indianapolis Metropolitan upon seeing a vehicle with a damaged headlight, approached the car to speak to the driver, Washington. Upon reaching the vehicle the officer inquired whether there were any weapons present onboard. Washington admitted to having a handgun, which was located under the driver's seat. He also informed Officer Reynolds that he had a valid license for the weapon. Washington was handcuffed and upon discovering the weapon under the seat the Officer also found a bag of marijuana that was next to the handgun. Despite the presence of a valid handgun permit the officer issued Washington a summons to show in court.

Issues

The key issue is that of Melvin Washington's interlocutory appeal in retaliation of the court's denial of his motion that demands that all evidence discovered while the vehicle was searched be repressed. He states that the search was in direct violation of the Fourth Amendment of the US Constitution and also that of Article 1, Section 11 of the Indiana Constitution.

Decisions (Holdings)

On November 12, 2008, Washington was charged by the State for the possession of marijuana, as a Class A offense and a Class C infraction for not having fully functional headlights. On 29th April, 2009, Washington appealed to suppress the drugs found in his vehicle. This motion was denied by the court on the 18th of May, after an analysis of evidence and briefs from both parties. However the court accepted Washington's interlocutory appeal in August.

Reasoning (Rationale)

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The justification for the bases of the decision taken by the court is primarily focused on placing a paramount importance on officer safety. The action taken by Officer Reynolds was therefore relevant as he conducted a search for the weapon in order to ensure his safety.

Separate Opinions

There are divergent opinions pertaining to the case mostly because of the lack of a warrant obtained in order to search the vehicle when no prior suspicion was aroused and Washington has cooperated to the fullest. Hence there was no legitimate concern for the officers safety or any solid bases to believe if any crime was or had been conducted. Based on this notion the search was illegal and hence the evidence it resulted in should have been suppressed.

Analysis

The case presented clashes on an interesting aspects: that which ensure the safety of police officers or one that serves to protect the constitutional right of citizens.

Reference

Washington v. State. In the court of appeals Indiana. No. 49A02-0907-CR-649 (2010). Retrieved from: <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/opinions/pdf/03041001jsk.pdf>