

ShotSpotter Responds to False and Misleading Allegations by VICE News

Newark, Calif., -- ShotSpotter, Inc., a leader in precision policing technology solutions that enable law enforcement to more effectively respond to, investigate, and deter crime, responds below to false and misleading allegations that VICE published on July 26, 2021:

To the Communities We Serve:

Recently, *VICE* published outrageous allegations that create a false narrative about our technology, review and forensic process that undermine the important work ShotSpotter does every day to help combat the gun violence epidemic.

First, ShotSpotter forensic evidence is 100% reliable and based entirely on the facts and science. ShotSpotter has never altered the information in a court-admissible detailed forensic report based on fitting a police narrative.

It is important to understand that there are two separate and equally important forms of review of potential gunshot events, and these processes are optimized for different things. VICE conflated the two, causing confusion for readers.

The first type is ShotSpotter gunfire alerts which are real-time notifications that detect and alert police to a specific gunfire incident. The goal is to quickly determine when and where gunfire has occurred within a city's coverage area and to create a rapid and precise police response. They are created in less than 60 seconds using a combination of machine classification and a human reviewer's replay of the sounds and analysis of the waveforms to make a final determination as to whether the incident is a gunshot or a non-gunshot. This process is 97% accurate based on customers reporting back to the company for the years 2019 and 2020.

The second type is a detailed forensic report prepared as courtroom evidence and for expert witness testimony. It is a court-admissible analysis of a gunfire incident. Our expert forensic analysts spend on average eight hours per incident to compile a court-admissible report using specialized tools that differ from those used for alerts. These reports are 100% exact on rounds fired, timing, sequence, and location of shots fired – something they can testify to in court under oath.

ShotSpotter evidence and expert witness testimony have been successfully admitted in 190 court cases in 20 states. ShotSpotter evidence has prevailed in ten successful *Frye* challenges and one successful *Daubert* challenge in courts throughout the United States. Our data compiled with our expert analysis help both the prosecution and defense.

The detailed forensic report is never altered because it is a completely separate process from the alerts. Forensic analysis may uncover additional information relative to a real-time alert such as more rounds fired or an updated timing or location upon more thorough

investigation by forensic analysis. We respond to requests to further investigate an incident for a forensic report only to provide the facts that we can determine and not to fit a predetermined narrative. This is about being diligent and providing the appropriate evidence and insights in the evidentiary chain of custody and nothing more. **The idea that ShotSpotter “alters” or “fabricates” evidence in any way is an outrageous lie and would be a criminal offense. We follow the facts and data for our forensic analysis. Period.**

Second, ShotSpotter Will Not Tolerate False Characterizations of the Two Cases VICE Cited

VICE’s article falsely alleged that in the Williams case in Chicago, Illinois, prosecutors withdrew ShotSpotter evidence because it would not meet scientific evidentiary standards due to having been altered. This is 100% false. In fact, no ShotSpotter evidence for this case was altered at any time. ShotSpotter forensic analysts evaluated the incident to create a court-admissible forensic report. Based on publicly available data and our understanding of this case, the prosecutor’s theory was that the defendant shot the victim in a car. ShotSpotter detected a gunshot in the area, and we have always publicly stated that ShotSpotter does not guarantee detection of gunshots that are in cars or inside buildings.

The article also falsely and without any substantiation alleged that ShotSpotter fabricated evidence or altered audio files in the Simmons case in Rochester, New York. The audio files ShotSpotter recorded and used during the trial were secured and preserved using industry-standard forensic procedures. Audio files submitted as evidence were reviewed by our forensic analysts to create a court-admissible forensic report. They were never altered by ShotSpotter. We are currently engaged in a lawsuit and are vigorously defending our position.

Third, the ShotSpotter system is highly accurate at detecting outdoor gunshots and benefits communities battling gun violence.

The article falsely twisted the words of a ShotSpotter forensic expert to suggest our accuracy rates are the product of our marketing or sales departments. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 2019 and 2020, the ShotSpotter system had a 97% accuracy rate for real-time detections across all customers, a figure derived directly from police department reports. At the same time, ShotSpotter promises them a 90% accuracy rate in our service level agreements because our customers expect and deserve a minimum accuracy rate. Our system has been tested to ensure that we correctly convey our system’s efficacy to our customers. In addition, ShotSpotter rigorously trains and tests every individual reviewing real-time gunfire incidents at the company to ensure they perform at a level consistent with the company’s quality objectives.

VICE’s attempted takedown is a sad distraction from the issue at hand: addressing gun violence to keep our communities safe. In recent weeks, shootings have surged in many parts of the country, robbing us of American lives. ShotSpotter is a tool for helping law enforcement put a stop to this senseless violence and break the cycle of the normalization of gun violence in our communities. We will not tolerate our company being maligned and will vigorously defend our work in making communities safer for all.

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