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Rubber bullets down man

■ St. Petersburg police began experimenting with the soft projectile scatter shot several months ago.

By MARK JOURNEY
Times Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — After negotiating for about five hours, St. Petersburg police on Monday fired a round of experimental rubber bullets at a man who threatened to shoot himself or anyone who approached him.

Raymond Paden, 21, of 4600 33rd Ave. N, was not injured after police shot him once in the chest with the soft rubber projectiles. It was the first time St. Petersburg police have used the new bullets since they began experimenting with it several months ago.

The light cylindrical projectiles were designed by Def Tec Corp. of Rock Creek, Ohio, to startle but not injure suspects. Each round, which is fired from a 37mm gas gun, contains five of the rubber bullets.

"We were able to put him at a disadvantage," said Lt. Larry Pic, lead coordinator for the police Tactical Apprehension and Control team. ". . . We did not want to use deadly force unless there was absolutely no other way to disarm the man."

Paden was arrested and charged with armed burglary, aggravated assault, resisting arrest and carrying a concealed firearm. He was booked in the Pinellas County Jail and bail was set at $40,000.

Police were called to 3321 Seventh Ave. N about 3:30 a.m. Monday after residents said a man broke a window and tried to enter their home. When police arrived, they found Paden hiding under the house with a 9mm handgun.

Paden threatened to kill himself or the officers if they approached, said St. Petersburg police spokesman Bill Doniel. He said police decided to shoot Paden with the rubber bullets after negotiators failed to convince him to surrender.

At least one of the bullets hit Paden in the chest, giving several officers time to tackle and arrest him. He was first taken to Bayfront Medical Center for an examination, then booked at the jail.

Naveed Uddin, who lives at the home police say Paden tried to enter, said she and her husband worked with Paden several years ago at a motel on 34th Street N. At the time, Mrs. Uddin and her husband Mark, managed the motel and Paden worked as a desk clerk.

Paden was fired from the motel job after he held officers at gunpoint during a similar incident, Mrs. Uddin said.

She said her family has not had contact with Paden for several years. Mrs. Uddin said she does not know why Paden came to her house.

"He felt he was like part of the family," she said. "There is no kinship. We have no relationship with him absolutely."

After the incident, police said they were pleased with the rubber bullets, which also are used by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.

In the past, officers have tried to subdue suspects using Taser guns, which shock suspects. Police only can use those weapons from a few feet away because electrical barbs fired into suspects are connected by wires to the gun. The barbs must be removed at hospitals.

Police say the rubber bullets, fired from the same weapons that shoot tear gas, can be used from a distance. In addition, they seem to cause only minor injuries.

Times photo — JOE WALLES

St. Petersburg police officers escort Raymond Paden from the house at 3321 Seventh Ave. N.

PINELLAS DIGEST

Hazardous materials spill stable

SEMINOLE — A sprinkler was nearly enough to extinguish a small fire Monday morning at Universal Circuits, 8801 Enterprise Blvd. But some vats containing a caustic soda mixture overflowed, and the county Hazardous Materials team was called in, said team commander Douglas Meyer. . Dam Kim Duong, 34, a Universal Circuits employee, was taken to Metropolitan General Hospital after the incident; he was treated and released Monday morning. Firefighters from Seminole, Largo and Pinellas Park were at the scene six minutes after the 911 call came in at 4:25 a.m., but the fire was nearly out. The Hazardous Materials team later determined that the spill was stable and contained. Seminole fire investigators believe the fire began in a heating element for one of the vats, Meyer said. The blaze destroyed the vat, some wiring and pipes.

Free firewood near Riviera Bay

ST. PETERSBURG — Free firewood still is available to residents near Riviera Bay, where workers are clearing land for a marsh restoration project. The wood is Australian pine, which is considered a pest in the natural environment but makes excellent firewood. The marsh is being restored under a state program, and the wood cleared from the site has been made available to residents for several weeks. The wood is available on a first-come basis at the project site. To reach the site, travel east on 74th Avenue N off Fourth Street. At the end of 74th Avenue N, turn left on Locust Street. The wood is at the end of the street.

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