

Police say man killed by officer struck first

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FULL TEXT

'Suspicious person' inquiry culminated in attack, shooting in Md.

A man fatally shot by a police officer during a confrontation in Silver Spring continued his assault after the officer had used pepper spray and fired his gun as the man ran at him, Montgomery County police said Tuesday. The department released more details in Monday's shooting in the parking lot of a townhouse community, identifying the officer as Anand Badgujar and the man killed as Robert Lawrence White, 41, of Silver Spring. Badgujar, who was in the 9200 block of Three Oaks Drive after finishing an unrelated call, radioed for help investigating a "suspicious person" at 2:14 p.m. Monday, police said.

The officer attempted to speak with the man, who became combative before a physical confrontation, Montgomery Police Chief J. Thomas Manger said.

The officer's body-camera footage and an eyewitness account indicate that White assaulted Badgujar after the officer tried to speak to him, police said.

Badgujar tried to pepper spray White and called for help, police said. White walked away and the officer went to his cruiser to turn off the ignition.

"At this point White began approaching the officer and as he got closer, began running at the officer," Montgomery police said in a statement Tuesday. The "officer backpedaled, and White knocked him down as the officer discharged his weapon."

White fell, got back up, stood over the officer and "continued to assault the officer," police said. Badgujar fired "additional rounds" and White fell.

White was not armed, police said Monday. His relatives could not immediately be located for interviews Tuesday.

"According to witnesses, there was conversation that started, and he immediately became combative," Manger said of White.

Morgan Blackledge, an attorney representing Badgujar in the investigation, declined to comment Tuesday, saying it is too early in the case to do so.

The content of the conversation between the officer, who is of Indian descent, and White, an African American, was not clear, police said. Detectives are still investigating what behavior prompted Badgujar to approach White and why the 911 center classified the initial incident as a call for a suspicious person, said Capt. Paul Starks, a Montgomery County police spokesman.

The encounter had lasted about two minutes when a second officer arrived requesting medics and reporting gunshots, Manger said.

Officers provided first aid to White, but he was pronounced dead at a hospital, police said.

Badgujar suffered minor injuries, which were treated at a police station, police said.

Badgujar worked for the Baltimore police from 2011 to 2016 and left the department as a sergeant, police there said. He has been with the Montgomery police for two years.

Badgujar has been placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation, which will be conducted by prosecutors in Howard County. Montgomery and Howard counties have an agreement to review each other's cases related to shootings by officers.

Jana Owens, an IT contractor who was working at home Monday in her townhouse, said she heard yelling before a

burst of gunfire - anywhere from four to seven rapid bangs, she recalled.

Owens, 63, said she walked to a balcony on her home in the Three Oaks community and saw a police officer pull up in a cruiser and then more officers arriving. They hurried to the man who was shot and gathered around him, she recalled.

"They were pumping on his chest," Owens said. "They were saying, 'Hang on! Hang on!' "

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