

# Midlothian cop told Jemel Roberson to drop weapon before fatal Robbins shooting, state police say. Lawyer claims probe rushed.

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## FULL TEXT

A Midlothian police officer gave “multiple verbal commands” to security officer Jemel Roberson to drop his gun and get on the ground before fatally shooting Roberson at a Robbins bar Sunday morning, according to details from a preliminary Illinois State Police investigation released late Tuesday.

But an attorney for Roberson’s family questioned Wednesday how quickly police were releasing details of their investigation, and he also took issue with a police description of what Roberson was wearing during the incident. State police, who said the investigation remains open, cited “witness statements” in their report.

Roberson, who was black, was working security at the bar. The preliminary report says that Roberson was wearing “plain black clothing with no markings readily identifying him as a Security Guard,” and was “armed with a gun in the west parking lot” of the bar when the Midlothian officer, who is white and was responding to a “shots fired” call at the bar, came upon him.

The report by state police contradicts claims made by the attorney for Roberson’s family that Roberson was wearing a hat that had “security” printed on it. The lawyer has also said witnesses told him several people called out to the officer that Roberson was a security guard.

The state police investigation found that about 4 a.m., “an armed suspect (had) entered the lounge and opened fire striking multiple people inside the establishment.” Officers from Robbins, Midlothian and other suburban departments had responded.

The preliminary investigation revealed Roberson, 26, of Chicago, was “attempting to subdue a subject suspected to be involved in the initial shooting” at Manny’s Blue Room Lounge, 2911 S. Claire Blvd. in Robbins, according to witnesses.

“According to witness statements, the (unidentified) Midlothian Officer gave the armed subject (Roberson) multiple verbal commands to drop the gun and get on the ground before ultimately discharging his weapon and striking the subject,” state police said.

The state police report said “officers readily provided medical assistance to multiple gunshot victims, including Roberson. Roberson was transported to a local area hospital where he was pronounced deceased.”

Midlothian police asked the Illinois State Police Public Integrity Task Force to conduct an independent investigation of the officer’s use of force. The Cook County sheriff’s office is investigating the initial shooting.

The officer, a member of the patrol division and a team leader on the South Suburban Emergency Response Team, is on paid administrative leave, pending the outcome of the Illinois State Police investigation.

Midlothian police officials clarified Wednesday that he’d been with the department for nearly four years and had spent three years prior to that with another agency. Previously, officials had said he’d been with the department for seven years.

The state police report was issued at the end of a day during which questions were still being asked about the shooting and emotions still were running high. Online commenters and a small group of protesters outside the

Midlothian police station Tuesday night said Roberson was being a “good guy with a gun” and that he was shot by police because he’s black.

Greg Kulis, the attorney for Roberson’s family, said he’d never seen the state police issue a statement with preliminary findings just 2 1/2 days into an investigation of an officer-involved shooting, saying he often has to fight for months to even get reports from the agency.

Kulis said he had no idea what information state police had relied on to make their preliminary findings, but he said that he had spoken to witnesses who would testify that Roberson was dressed in marked security garb and that bystanders were yelling at the Midlothian officer that Roberson was a security guard before the officer opened fire. “They can say what they want to say, the facts will, hopefully, ultimately show what occurred,” he said, adding that he didn’t put a lot of credence in the agency’s findings, citing a joint WBEZ and Better Government Association investigation that found none of the officers involved in 113 suburban Cook County police shootings since 2005 had been disciplined, fired or charged criminally.

“Out of 100-and-something shootings, I don’t believe that 113 of them were justified,” Kulis said.

The lawyer said he planned to immediately request that state police turn over “every single” document its investigators used to make their preliminary findings.

“Guess what? They’ve issued a statement. I’m entitled to see it now,” Kulis said.

Illinois State Police Sgt. Jacqueline Cepeda said: “At this time the investigation is open and ongoing, and the press release sent out (Tuesday) is all we will be disseminating as of now. Should we send any additional information out regarding any updates to the case we will ensure you receive the information.”

Also Wednesday, an official with the Illinois Liquor Control Commission said the bar’s state liquor license had expired Sept. 30 and that the agency had not yet received a renewal application. A \$500 penalty is imposed for a lapsed license, and additional fines can be issued for repeated license lapses or if other violations of state liquor laws occur, the agency said.

It was not immediately clear what penalties the business could face if it served alcohol without a valid state liquor license.

As to whether Manny’s has a valid local liquor license, Robbins Village Administrator Keith Freeman said Wednesday: “In order for you to do business in Robbins, you have to have a valid liquor license, so yes, they had a valid liquor license.” He did not immediately provide a copy of the document.

*Matthew Walberg is a Chicago Tribune reporter.*

*zkoeske@tribpub.com*

*mwalberg@chicagotribune.com*

*Twitter @ZakKoeske*

*Twitter @mattwalberg1*

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