

Neighbors resilient in face of second police - Patriot-News, The (Harrisburg, PA) - January 21, 2018 - page A1

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It was not lost on anyone at the scene of Thursday morning's tragedy in Harrisburg that the yellow police tape was up at almost precisely the same spots as during another deadly, police-involved shooting the week before Christmas.

That kind of repeated off-the-charts violence has left residents of this section of Allison Hill unnerved, to be sure.

"Cop got shot. Cop dead," said a worker at the nearby Hilltop Restaurant on 17th Street who only gave his first name, John, to a reporter. He slowly shook his head at the awful thought of it all.

"They protect you. And they dyin' now? Lord help us. Please."

His thoughts summed up the stunned sadness that hung over the neighborhood Thursday morning, as residents found themselves trapped once again in an all-hands-on-deck crime scene.

But there's one other thing you should know about these Harrisburgers, who hold jobs, shovel snow, make car payments and send the kids to school like everyone else.

These back-to-back incidents, to them, speak to a city-wide crime problem, a too-many-guns-out-there problem, and maybe even mental health or domestic violence problems.

But it's not a Mulberry Street problem.

The fact that Ahmed El-Mofty's city-wide rampage ended on these same blocks was really nothing more than coincidence.

Investigators' preliminary finding in that case suggested that El-Mofty might have simply reached the breaking point after a series of disappointments in his life.

And the Thursday morning shooting that felled multiple law enforcement officers, killing Deputy U.S. Marshal Christopher Hill, seems to have resulted from one man's bad reaction to an arrest warrant service.

That man has been identified as **Kevin Sturgis**, 31, of Philadelphia.

Killed by officers returning his fire, Sturgis also had active warrants from the court system in Philadelphia on unlawful gun possession and other charges.

The reality is these violent eruptions can, and do, happen all over Pennsylvania, and all over the

United States every day.

So while the residents and workers in Allison Hill do appreciate your support and prayers, they would ask, please hold off on your judgment.

"I don't think this street is a bad street," said Chris Morris, a 29-year-old clerk at Piccolo's Cafe at 17th and Mulberry streets.

"You just had two people make not-good decisions, you know?"

That is not to say that people weren't rattled by the mayhem.

Eric Anderson, a 19-year-old Harrisburg High School student who was staying with his grandmother on South 18th Street, said they were awakened Thursday morning by the sustained gunfight around the corner.

Anderson, like several reached Thursday on the outskirts of the evidence collection zone, noted he is no stranger to the sound of gunplay on city streets.

But this, he allowed, was different.

"What we're used to, it's not OK. But it's like, if you grew up in an urban area, you do get used to it (gunshots). But this was like, 10, 12, kept going and kept going ... It kind of was scary."

One woman, who refused to give her name as she walked near The Corner Store at 19th and Bellevue streets, had noticed the helicopter buzzing overhead, but only learned of the shooting from a reporter.

"I am concerned. I have children, but even if i didn't, this is not a way of life," she said.

"It seems like every other day I hear gunfire in the street. ... I don't think that human beings were meant to live this way."

But the bigger theme was, in a word, resilience.

Macy Owens, an 18-year-old recent high school graduate and Kensington Street resident was walking through the neighborhood on her way to Harrisburg Area Community College's Midtown Campus.

"People are just crazy," she said, when asked about the shooting.

And, like Anderson, she conceded that she's grown up with gunshots almost as part of the background noise of the city.

But Owens wanted to warn against anyone watching or reading the news from making any snap judgments about her neighborhood or the people who live here.

“Where you live doesn’t determine who you are,” the teen noted. “Just because you live in the ‘hood, doesn’t make you ghetto.”

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