

Cop in fatal shooting of security guard in 'very real fear for his life,' Midlothian says

Nolan, Mike . TCA Regional News ; Chicago [Chicago]18 Dec 2018.

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FULL TEXT

Dec. 18--A Midlothian police officer who fatally shot security guard Jemel Roberson has been subjected to death threats, with police patrols assigned to his house, according to the village.

The disclosure came in a Dec. 13 letter from the village to the state attorney general's office in response to a Daily Southtown request under the state's Freedom of Information Act for information about the officer.

Roberson was shot in the early morning hours of Nov. 11 at Manny's Blue Room in Robbins, where he was working security, when a fight broke out and shots were fired.

Police from multiple jurisdictions responded to the shooting, including a white officer from neighboring Midlothian, who shot Roberson in the parking lot as he held one of the suspected bar shooters on the ground at gunpoint, according to witnesses.

The Southtown is seeking police reports generated by Midlothian police related to the shooting, as well as the officer's personnel files. The Southtown is continuing to seek the information through FOIA requests with the attorney general.

In its response to the chief of the attorney general's public access bureau, Midlothian notes the "officer has very real fear for his life if he is identified at this time."

The village cited posts on social media, including the police department's Facebook page, and said that apart from death threats, there have been "intentional attempts to disclose (the officer's) home address."

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State police are investigating the shooting, and the officer is on administrative leave pending the outcome of that investigation.

"Demands for the officer's termination, prosecution and incarceration have been proposed regardless of what the investigation and evidence determine," Midlothian's letter to the attorney general's office states.

On Nov. 20, U.S. District Court Judge Joan Lefkow denied a motion by Roberson's family seeking to force the disclosure of the officer. The matter is scheduled to be back before the judge on Jan. 18.

In denying the Southtown's request for police reports and supplemental files pertaining to the shooting, Midlothian notes that such information is in the hands of state police, and such a disclosure would jeopardize the investigation.

"The specific reasons disclosure would compromise the investigation involves witnesses who have yet to be interviewed and suspects involved in the incident that have yet to be arrested," the letter reads.

Witnesses and Roberson's family said that Roberson was wearing clothing identifying him as a security guard, although a preliminary investigation by state police disputes that. State police said the Midlothian officer gave Roberson "multiple verbal commands" to drop his gun and get on the ground, but witnesses said the officer started firing at Roberson before giving him an adequate chance to respond to the verbal commands.

Midlothian police later issued a statement offering condolences to Roberson's family and calling the shooting "the equivalent of a 'blue on blue,' friendly fire incident."

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DETAILS

Subject:	Social networks; Shootings; Attorneys general; Guards
Location:	United States--US
People:	Nolan, Mike Roberson, Jemel
Company / organization:	Name: Facebook Inc; NAICS: 518210, 519130; Name: District Court-US; NAICS: 922110
Publication title:	TCA Regional News; Chicago
Publication year:	2018
Publication date:	Dec 18, 2018
Publisher:	Tribune Content Agency LLC
Place of publication:	Chicago
Country of publication:	United States, Chicago
Publication subject:	Business And Economics
Source type:	Wire Feeds
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2157836752
Document URL:	https://search.proquest.com/docview/2157836752?accountid=14026
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Last updated:	2018-12-18
Database:	Global Newsstream

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