

Police examine shooter's link to thefts; Man killed by trooper in exchange of fire at Lower Macungie Walmart is a suspect in Schuylkill crimes.

Gamiz, Manuel, Jr . Morning Call ; Allentown, Pa. [Allentown, Pa]03 Apr 2018: A.6.

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FULL TEXT

While fairly certain he's their guy, state police are continuing to investigate whether Aaron Ibrahim, the man shot dead after he fired at a state trooper last week at a Walmart in Lower Macungie, was behind a string of retail thefts at Walmarts in Schuylkill County, including one where he pulled a gun on an employee.

"We're still working on that for a positive confirmation," Lt. Joseph Sokolofski, head of Troop M's criminal investigations unit, said. "It would appear by the M.O. and the surveillance footage that it is one and the same." Sokolofski said investigators are looking into four shoplifting reports at Walmarts in Schuylkill County that could be linked to Ibrahim, 26 of Longswamp Township, Berks County.

He said they began in February and during the last of the four, on March 15, a masked shoplifter was fleeing the Walmart in Saint Clair with a shopping cart full of electronics when a store employee stopped him.

The shoplifter pulled a gun and the employee backed away and the shoplifter fled in a white minivan, police said. After that crime, store officials alerted employees at other Walmarts, which is what caught the attention of a loss prevention officer at the Walmart on Millcreek Road in Lower Macungie.

State police said Ibrahim was wearing a wig and a lifelike mask when he walked into the Lower Macungie Walmart at 8:50 p.m. Wednesday. A loss prevention officer saw him filling a shopping cart, and grew suspicious because of the Schuylkill County alert.

The loss prevention officer phoned state police at 9:07 p.m., and a trooper arrived in two minutes. The trooper encountered Ibrahim in the vestibule of the store. Ibrahim dumped the shopping cart and started walking out the side exit of the store, police said.

Once Ibrahim stepped out of the store, the trooper ordered him to stop, but Ibrahim took off running through the parking lot, nearly getting hit by a passing car, police said. Ibrahim fired one shot at the trooper from 15 yards away once he reached his minivan, police said. Ibrahim managed to get in the minivan and continued to point his gun at the trooper, who fired through the van's window and door, police said.

Police recovered a .40-caliber Glock on Ibrahim's lap. Besides investigating his connection to the string of Schuylkill County thefts, police are also looking into how he got the gun, Sokolofski said.

Ibrahim had an extensive criminal history, which included felonies, and pleaded guilty to leading police on a 2014 chase in Hanover Township, Northampton County, where he threatened to shoot police. During his sentencing for the chase, Ibrahim told a judge he had bipolar disorder and she recommended he be sent to a state prison where he could receive mental health treatment.

Sokolofski said the trooper who fired on Ibrahim continues to be on administrative duties, as is protocol on all police-involved shootings. The trooper is a four-year veteran who was working his first week at the Fogelsville barracks.

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Credit: By Manuel Gamiz Jr. - Of The Morning Call - mgamiz@mcall.com; Twitter @mannypantalones; 610-820-6595

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