

Backup 25 miles away in fatal shooting - Daytona Beach News-Journal, The (FL) - August 7, 2018 - page C1

August 7, 2018 | Daytona Beach News-Journal, The (FL) | Patricio G. Balona patricio.balona@news-jrnl.com | Article | Page C1

A Volusia County sheriff's deputy who shot and killed a Seville man while responding alone to a domestic violence incident over the weekend had backup, but it was 25 miles away, an official said Monday.

So the Sheriff's Office is looking for ways to increase the number of deputies in the rural northwest area of Volusia County or find some form of assistance from nearby counties, said sheriff's spokesman Andrew Gant.

"Many of you have asked why a backup deputy did not arrive on scene during the 12 minutes of body-camera video we provided," Gant said.

It also took 16 minutes for the first-responding deputy, Brandon Watson, to be sent on the call because a Volusia County sheriff's dispatcher had difficulty finding the location of the house on her computer. The dispatcher initially contacted Putnam County to see if Seville and the address was in their jurisdiction, according to 9-1-1 recordings.

At least two Volusia County sheriff's deputies are dispatched to all priority calls, including domestic violence-related calls, Gant said.

"A second deputy was dispatched to Friday's call, too," Gant said. "However, that deputy was traveling from DeLand to the remote incident location in Seville, a distance of about 25 miles."

As backup deputies rushed to help Watson, who was sent on a well-being check at 1600 N. U.S. 17, Watson found himself the only deputy there with an uncooperative suspect. While trying to figure out what was happening at the home, a confrontation between Watson and the suspect quickly escalated, ending with the deputy shooting 29-year-old **Emmanuel Alquisiras**, said Sheriff Mike Chitwood.

Watson was responding to a report of an ongoing domestic disturbance between Alquisiras and his wife, Elianet Escobar, around 7:39 p.m. Friday.

When Escobar, 24, came out and spoke to the deputy, her husband grabbed her and they started to struggle at the top of the stairs, investigators said.

Watson shot Alquisiras with a Taser to get him away from the woman but he continued to struggle with the deputy for several minutes. During the struggle, Alquisiras grabbed the deputy's Taser, and the Taser was discharged, investigators said.

Chitwood said in the body-worn camera video at the time of the final struggle, a targeting light from the Taser appears on a porch rail. It appeared similar to the beam of a flashlight.

The sheriff said that indicates Alquisiras had control of Watson's Taser and was ready to fire. The deputy then fired five shots from his pistol, hitting Alquisiras four times.

Everything was over by the time backup deputies arrived.

Gant said Seville is a rural unincorporated community with a population of less than 700. Known by deputies as Zone 21, it's in the far northwest corner of Volusia County.

"The geographic area of Zone 21 is extremely large, but the law enforcement call volume there is extremely low compared to other areas of Volusia County," Gant said.

"The reality has always been that fewer deputies are available to immediately respond to a call in Seville than in Deltona, for example, where population density and call volume are high," Gant said.

"The video of Friday's incident is a clear illustration of that reality."

In Friday's case, deputies responded on a well-being check and had third-hand information from the person who called for help that the woman was being battered by the suspect, Gant said.

The person who made the call was the Domestic Abuse Council's victim advocate who was working to protect Escobar.

She said Escobar had come for help two days before the shooting and she had bruises all over her body.

"I have a participant who is danger right now," the advocate said to the dispatcher. "I need that man out of the house."

The advocate said Alquisiras has physically beaten Escobar, even knocking her out with a punch in one instance, she said in the emergency call.

"We believe that had the deputy not approached the residence to check on her — and had she turned out to be injured or worse — then we would be facing a different set of questions today," Gant said.

The incident is under review by the Sheriff's Office.

"As in all cases, and especially in deputy-involved shootings, the Sheriff's Office is examining every factor that played a role in Friday's incident," Gant said.

"The agency is taking steps to increase the number of deputies available to respond in a shorter amount of time in Zone 21, to request and receive aid from neighboring counties when needed and to communicate the status and location of backup units to the initial unit on scene."