

Shootout kills marshal, suspect - Two police - Morning Call, The (Allentown, PA) - January 19, 2018 - page 1A

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A gun threat over a double-parked car three months ago.

That, authorities said, sparked a shootout Thursday morning in Harrisburg that left a deputy U.S. marshal dead, a police officer wounded and another hit but unharmed because of his armored vest.

Deputy Marshal Christopher David Hill, 45, a married father of two, was shot and killed when he and other members of the marshals' Fugitive Task Force served an arrest warrant at a home in a city neighborhood, authorities said. Court records say the woman wanted on the warrant pointed a gun at another woman during a parking spat in November.

Authorities said a man shot at officers when they came to arrest the woman at 6:30 a.m., and they returned fire, killing the man.

"Christopher Hill died a hero today," U.S. Attorney Dave Freed said during a news conference at the federal building in Harrisburg about eight hours after the fatal encounter. "We will honor his memory by standing with his family and his brothers and sisters in law enforcement."

York police officer Kyle Pitts, a 10-year veteran of the city police department and a member of the task force, was wounded in the shooting in the 1800 block of Mulberry Street, Freed said. A Harrisburg officer was shot in his body armor and was not injured, he added.

Authorities later identified the shooter as **Kevin Sturgis**, 31, of Philadelphia. He had his own outstanding warrants for skipping a sentencing hearing on a gun charge and failing to appear at a probation violation hearing concerning a past charge of receiving stolen property and unauthorized use of a car. Sturgis had nine closed adult criminal cases dating to 2005 and juvenile adjudication for rape.

The woman who was the subject of the warrant was identified as Shayla Lynette Towles Pierce, 30. She was sent to Dauphin County jail under \$200,000 bail on charges of making terroristic threats, simple assault and carrying a firearm without a license.

According to Freed, this is how investigators, so far, believe the shooting unfolded:

Task force officers, armed with the arrest warrant, arrived at the house on Mulberry Street in the Allison Hill neighborhood, 1.5 miles from the state Capitol complex. They knocked, identified themselves and entered through the front door. Pierce and two children then appeared at the top of the steps. She surrendered and was handcuffed.

Then shots rang out from the second floor, hitting Hill and Pitts. The other officers got the wounded out the back door and set up a perimeter while Hill was rushed to a downtown hospital, where he later died.

Dauphin County District Attorney Fran Chardo said during the news conference that an early review indicates the shooting was justifiable self-defense. The shooter started firing first, he said.

Pitts, the York officer, was undergoing surgery and expected to make a full recovery.

Dauphin County Court records show Harrisburg police filed a criminal complaint Dec. 2 for Pierce.

According to that criminal complaint:

On Nov. 25, Harrisburg police officer Rachel James responded to a call at 1837 Mulberry St. A woman told James she asked another woman - later identified as Pierce - to move her double-parked car out of the street. Rather than comply, Pierce pulled a gun from her purse, pointed it at the woman's head and said, "I'll shoot you," before lowering the gun and then raising it again in a menacing fashion.

The woman took a picture of the double-parked car's license plate and police tracked the car's owner to the location of the call, 1837 Mulberry St., but police could not track the owner down. The woman picked Pierce's photo out of a lineup, allowing James to file the warrant.

The task force is composed of federal marshals, local and state police and county sheriffs. It serves federal court warrants and helps track down fugitives.

U.S. Marshal Martin Pane, who heads the services' central Pennsylvania office, said Hill was one of the best at his job, using knowledge and skills learned as an Army Ranger to perform tactical maneuvers and handle explosives, all while never losing his sense of humor.

"I ask that you keep his wife and two children in your thoughts and prayers in this difficult time," Pane said while fighting back emotions.

"No words can adequately express the sadness we feel at this moment as we contemplate the loss of yet another law enforcement officer in the line of duty," Harrisburg Mayor Eric Papenfuse said.

The shooting occurred a block away from where police shot and killed a man last month after he drove around the city shooting at police cars.

A third shooting occurred in the same area in the last four months, said Ron Segrist, 53, who lives on Mulberry Street.

"A nice old guy was shot in the leg," he said. "It's just bizarre. So much hate on one block."

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