

PAWTUCKET - Officers identified in deadly - Providence Journal (RI) - September 11, 2018 - page A1

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PAWTUCKET - The Pawtucket police have identified the three officers involved in the fatal shooting of an armed man who they say attacked them on Newport Avenue on Friday morning.

A passing motorist called 911 at 6:10 a.m. when she saw a man bend down to tie his sneaker - exposing a gun on his belt, according to a dispatch log obtained Monday by The Journal. As officers searched for the man described by the caller, Officer Ana C. Vertentes was the first to find him on Newport Avenue, the Police Department said in a news release Monday.

The man with the gun was **DaShawn Cole**, 28, an ex-convict from the Boston area with a history of gun crimes and time in prison.

When Vertentes tried to "make contact" with Cole, the police say, he attacked her.

Vertentes struggled with Cole, "resulting in her discharging her firearm," police said. The police said Cole was still armed when he confronted Officers William P. Briggs and Dianne L. Rittman-McLaughlin, and they opened fire. (It wasn't clear from police which officers' bullets hit Cole.)

Sgt. Timothy Graham, a department spokesman, said Saturday that several officers tried to save Cole's life. "They performed CPR and also used a med kit to try to stem the bleeding until rescue arrived," he said in an email. "It is a department policy to provide care as needed as soon as is practical."

Cole was pronounced dead from gunshot wounds at Rhode Island Hospital.

Vertentes, who was hired in 2016, and Rittman-McLaughlin and Briggs, who were hired in 2010, are on paid administrative leave, pending an investigation by Pawtucket police, state police and the attorney general's office, as is customary in officer-involved shootings. The investigation is expected to go to a grand jury, which will determine whether the shooting was justified.

The dispatch log listed other officers who arrived before the first shots were fired: With Vertentes, Officers Taylor E. Fay and Rui J. Silva arrived at 6:14 a.m., just four minutes after the call. Minutes later, Briggs, Rittman-McLaughlin and officers Dylan Salvatore and Michael A. Haberek arrived.

At 6:18 a.m., the officers told dispatch they were with the man at the Shell gas station at Newport Avenue and Slade Street. Then, officers radioed "shots fired" and called for a rescue.

The dispatch log is supposed to include all calls received by the Police Department. However, the original log from Friday morning sent to The Journal from the clerk's office did not include any mention of the firearms call and officer-involved shooting. Instead, there was a gap in time from

1:29 a.m. to 6:39 a.m.

After questions from The Journal, the mayor's office sent the log that included the incident.

This followed calls Monday morning from the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island for Pawtucket police to release more information about the fatal shooting.

In recent instances, most departments in Rhode Island have moved swiftly to identify officers and give an explanation in officer-involved shootings. Providence police made videos from officers' body cameras and highway surveillance public the day after a fatal shooting on a Route 95 on-ramp last fall.

Pawtucket police have handled officer-involved shootings differently. While the department soon identified two officers who fatally shot an armed man in 2012, it waited nearly a week - and after protests - to talk about an incident and identify the officer who shot and killed a man who had a realistic-looking BB gun in 2016.

Police Chief Tina Goncalves said little about what happened Friday, except that the three officers confronted Cole, who she said assaulted one of the officers with the gun. She did not say whether Cole fired the weapon or what type of gun it was, or how it came into his possession.

The ACLU wasn't making any judgments about the officers' actions, executive director Steven Brown said yesterday, but the department's two-paragraph press release Monday "raises more questions than it answers."

The wording was ambiguous, Brown said, and the description of the deadly confrontation with officers was "deliberately and maddeningly vague."

"Reading between the lines, it does not appear that Cole actually brandished his firearm at any point," Brown said in an email. "It's even unclear whether the officers actually saw the firearm he had on him when he was first stopped or during the struggle that ensued, or whether they were just assuming he had one based on the call they received."

The lack of information stood in contrast to what police disclose in violent crimes involving civilians, the ACLU said. "The public deserves much more specific information at this time rather than such an imprecise and sketchy recounting of the shooting," Brown said.

There have been 14 deadly police shootings in Rhode Island since 2006; seven involve the Pawtucket police. The ACLU called on the state attorney general and Goncalves "to conduct a thorough review of the Pawtucket Police Department's training and practices to determine the causes behind this disconcerting track record."

Graham had no comment on the ACLU's call for an investigation of the number of police-involved shootings in Pawtucket.

-With reports from staff writer Tom Mooney