

No complaints, discipline found in files of officers involved in fatal shooting

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FULL TEXT

Dec. 12--BEMIDJI – The law enforcement officers involved in a recent fatal shooting have no complaints filed against them or any disciplinary actions in their personnel files to date.

The Beltrami County Sheriff's Office and the Bemidji Police Department recently released background information on the deputy and officer who shot and killed Vernon May during a traffic stop at the end of November. The agencies released the information in response to a public data request from the Pioneer.

May, 34, of Red Lake, died late on Wednesday, Nov. 28, during the traffic stop at the intersection of Ridgeway Avenue NW and 30th Street NW, which is near the Paul Bunyan Mall.

According to law enforcement officials, Bemidji Police Officer Bidal Duran initiated the traffic stop, and Beltrami County Sheriff's Deputy Brandon Newhouse arrived shortly thereafter. May, who was in the back seat of the vehicle, was asked to get out since he had a felony warrant. Both Duran and Newhouse noticed May had a handgun, and Duran and May subsequently began to struggle for control of the weapon, according to the original press release about the shooting. Sometime after that, both Duran and Newhouse fired their weapons, which resulted in May's death.

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension has begun investigating the shooting and subsequent death. The BCA will not release any facts about the investigation until it has been completed, officials there said. Following the shooting, both Duran and Newhouse were placed on paid administrative leave, which is standard procedure for the situation. Once the investigation is complete, the BCA will turn over its findings to the Beltrami County Attorney's Office, who would then file any charges in the death.

According to documents from the data request, Duran joined the Bemidji Police Department in January 2013, which was his first civilian job in law enforcement. In addition to his work at the department, he was honorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps. He graduated from BSU with a degree in criminal justice. He also graduated from the Hibbing Community College Peace Officer Education Program. His age was not included in the released documents, and officials did not return requests for that information.

According to his record, Duran has not received any complaints or disciplinary treatment for his conduct. He has, however, received multiple commendations from the Police Department. However, the department would not release the nature of those commendations.

Newhouse, 23, joined the Beltrami County Sheriff's Office as a bailiff in October 2015. Approximately a year later, he was promoted to the position of deputy.

Before joining the county, he graduated from BSU, majoring in criminal justice. He also completed the Law Enforcement Skills program at Alexandria Technical and Community College. Like Duran, Newhouse has not received any complaints or disciplinary marks for his conduct.

He does, however, have several commendations to his name, a couple of which refer to situations where a suspect possessed a firearm.

In one situation, Newhouse was part of a team of law enforcement officials who responded to a call of gunshots after a male reportedly threatened two other males and "fired multiple rounds into the air." According to the commendation, the authorities arrested the suspect and confiscated the weapon without anyone getting hurt.

Duran also was part of the team that responded to the situation, according to a list of officials to responded to the scene.

In another report, Newhouse was part of a team that responded to a situation where a man threatened to shoot his family, shot a round into the air, and then turned the gun to his own head.

"The subject was wanting a lethal confrontation with law enforcement," the report said.

The report then said Newhouse helped maintain the situation until the SWAT team arrived on scene. The suspect was then arrested using "less lethal methods" which resulted in "minor injuries."

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