

CMPD officer shoots, injures armed man during east Charlotte scuffle, police say

BY JEFF A. CHAMER
jchamer@charlotteobserver.com

A Charlotte police officer shot and critically injured a man who had two guns on Thursday evening in the 1300 block of West Sugar Creek Road, police said. No officers were injured, police said.

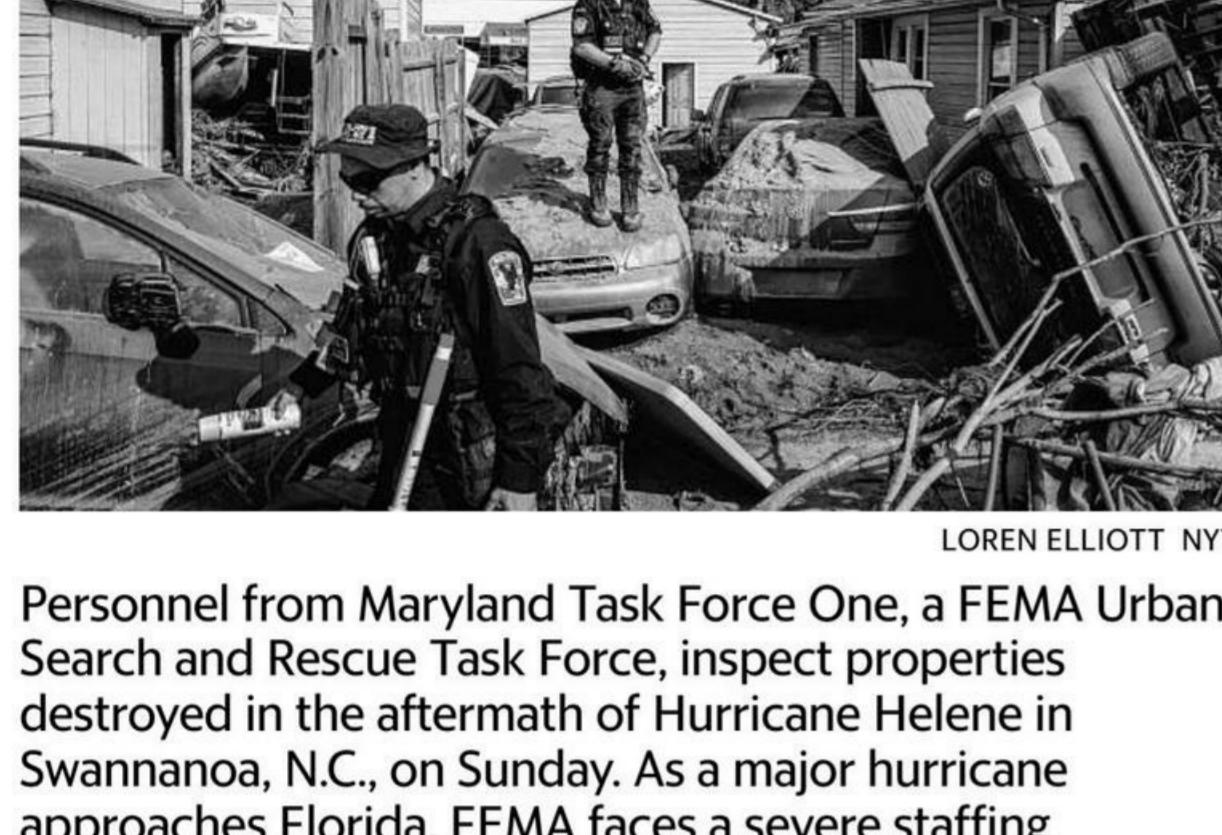
Officers were patrolling what police called "a high crime area" when they saw a man they knew to be a convicted felon with a gun, a CMPD news release said.

"Upon making contact with the suspect, a brief

struggle ensued," the news release said. "Officers perceived an imminent deadly threat and one officer discharged their firearm striking the suspect. The suspect was in possession of two firearms; both were recovered on scene."

Police did not release the name of the officer or the man who was shot, but said the man "has an extensive violent criminal history including attempted murder and murder." He was taken to a hospital.

The N.C. State Bureau of Investigation is investigating.



Personnel from Maryland Task Force One, a FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force, inspect properties destroyed in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in Swannanoa, N.C., on Sunday. As a major hurricane approaches Florida, FEMA faces a severe staffing shortage.

As Milton nears Florida, FEMA faces severe staffing shortage

BY CHRISTOPHER FLAVELLE
NYT News Service

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is running out of staff to deal with the potential devastation of Hurricane Milton as it barrels toward Tampa with wind speeds that have reached 175 mph.

As of Monday morning, just 9% of FEMA's personnel, or 1,217 people, were available to respond to the hurricane or other disasters, according to the agency's daily operations briefing. To put that into context: Over the previous five years, one-quarter of the agency's staff was available for deployment at this point in the hurricane season.

Even in 2017 – arguably FEMA's busiest year in the past decade, after Hurricane Harvey flooded Houston, Hurricane Irma plowed through Florida, and Hurricane Maria plunged Puerto Rico into darkness – FEMA's staffing reserves at this point in October were 19%, more than twice the levels they are at now.

The agency said Monday afternoon that it is well equipped to handle the strains. "FEMA is built for this," said Leilani Stainsby, the agency's deputy associate administrator for response and recovery.

But FEMA is stretched not just by the brutal aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which killed more than 200 people and destroyed sections of western North Carolina. Its staff is also responding to flooding and landslides in Vermont, tornadoes in Kansas, the aftermath of Tropical Storm Debby in New York and Georgia and the Watch Fire in Arizona.

And those are just the disasters that were declared in the past two weeks.

"The agency is simultaneously supporting over 100 major disaster declarations," Brock Long, who led FEMA during the Trump administration, said

in a statement. "The scale of staffing required for these operations is immense."

Now FEMA must find staff members to deploy to Florida, where Milton is on track to plop into Tampa, prompting officials to prepare for what could be the largest evacuation since 2017.

The relentless string of disasters, which are becoming more frequent and severe because of climate change, is just one challenge.

In a report last year, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that 35% of FEMA's positions were unfilled, partly because of "rising disaster activity during the year, which increased burnout and employee attrition."

The agency also faces a funding crunch. Congress last week approved FEMA's request to top up its disaster relief fund. That was before Hurricane Milton, and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas last week said FEMA needed additional funding from Congress to make it through the hurricane season. Speaker Mike Johnson has declined to call House lawmakers back from the campaign trail for an emergency session to fund hurricane relief and rebuilding.

Still, the most immediate problem for FEMA is finding enough people.

It's not just the top-line staff numbers that jump out. According to Monday's briefing, some of FEMA's most highly trained personnel, which are grouped into what the agency calls "cadres," are at particularly low levels. As of Monday morning, of the 2,579 people who work in the agency's Individual Assistance cadre, four were available to deploy to Florida. Four of the 94 people who work in the safety cadre were available. And just one of the 1,201 people working in disaster survivor assistance could be dispatched.



ADAM FERGUSON/NYT

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in August extended the tour of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Middle East. U.S. military officials have tried to balance commitments to Israel's defense against the risk of emboldening Israel to undertake a broader war.

Pentagon debate: Do US forces contain war, or inflame it?

BY HELENE COOPER
AND ERIC SCHMITT
NYT News Service

WASHINGTON

As the Israeli offensive in Lebanon expands to include ground incursions and intensifying airstrikes, senior Pentagon officials are discussing whether the enhanced U.S. military presence in the region is containing a widening war, as they had hoped, or inflaming it.

In the 12 months since Hamas attacked Israel, launching a conflict that includes Yemen, Iran and Lebanon, the Pentagon has sent a bristling array of weaponry to the region, including aircraft carriers, guided missile destroyers, amphibious assault ships and fighter squadrons.

The Pentagon announced last week that it would add a "few thousand" more troops to the equation and essentially doubled its air power in the region.

President Joe Biden says the U.S. hardware and extra troops are there to help defend Israel and to protect other U.S. troops on bases throughout the region. In an interview

Thursday, the deputy Pentagon spokesperson, Sabrina Singh, said the Defense Department's leadership remained "focused on the protection of U.S. citizens and forces in the region, the defense of Israel and the de-escalation of the situation through deterrence and diplomacy."

The larger American presence, she said, is meant to "deter aggression and reduce the risk of a broader regional war."

But several Pentagon officials expressed concern that Israel was waging an increasingly aggressive campaign against the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, Iran's most powerful proxy, knowing that an armada of U.S. warships and dozens of attack planes stand ready to help blunt any Iranian response.

"Right now, there's enough posture in the region that if the Iranians step in, we can and would support Israel's defense," said Dana Stroul, the Pentagon's top official for Middle East policy until last year. Of Israel's increasingly aggressive campaign against Hezbollah, she said, "If you're Israel and you're a military planner, you want to do all that while things are in the region, not after it leaves."

Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has raised the issue in meetings at the Pentagon and at the White House, officials said. Brown, a former F-16 pilot who commanded U.S. air forces in the Middle East, has also questioned the effect of the expanded American presence in the region on overall combat "readiness," the ability of the U.S. military to respond quickly to conflicts, including with China and Russia.

Brown, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other officials have tried to balance containing the conflict and emboldening Israel, one senior U.S. military official said. Another official said it was easier for Israel to go on offense when it knows that "Big Brother" is nearby.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

Dealing with the Israelis has become more difficult for the Pentagon, they said, as Israel has made clear that it will not warn the United States before it takes actions against what it views as existential threats.

On Sunday, Biden administration officials said they had talked to the Israelis and believed that they had agreed to a limited ground incursion into Lebanon. But Israel's raids look more like an extensive operation, other officials said.

Then, there was Israel's plan to assassinate the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, last week. Israel's defense minister, Yoav Gallant, the officials said, informed Austin during a call as the Israeli operation was underway.

Pentagon officials said Austin was seething that the Israelis did not give more notice to allow U.S. troops in the region to increase defensive measures against likely Iranian retaliation.

When asked about Austin's reaction, Singh told reporters that "he was caught off guard."

"How you interpret that, I'll leave that to you, but that was his reaction," she said. "And it was a frank and very firm conversation on both sides."

But that same day, the Pentagon said it was deploying a "few thousand" more U.S. troops to the region. A Defense Department official said the number would be between 2,000 and 3,000 and include aircrews with the three additional fighter squadrons, plus personnel to maintain, supply and protect them.

Iran has not attacked U.S. troops in the region directly, but has, rather, left that to its proxy groups. In February, the U.S. launched retaliatory strikes after an attack by an Iran-backed militia killed three U.S. troops in Jordan and injured 40 more.

Gen. Michael E. Kurilla, the head of the U.S. military's Central Command, requested the additional troops to protect U.S. forces in the region and to help defend Israel, when the expected Iranian retaliation came, the officials said.

Harris gets '60 Minutes' grilling she has avoided elsewhere

BY EWAN PALMER
Newsweek

Vice President Kamala Harris' "60 Minutes" interview was markedly different from her other planned media appearances.

Harris' interview with CBS News' Bill Whitaker, broadcast on Monday, was one of the toughest the vice president has undergone during her 2024 campaign as she faced questions on her economic plans, immigration and fracking.

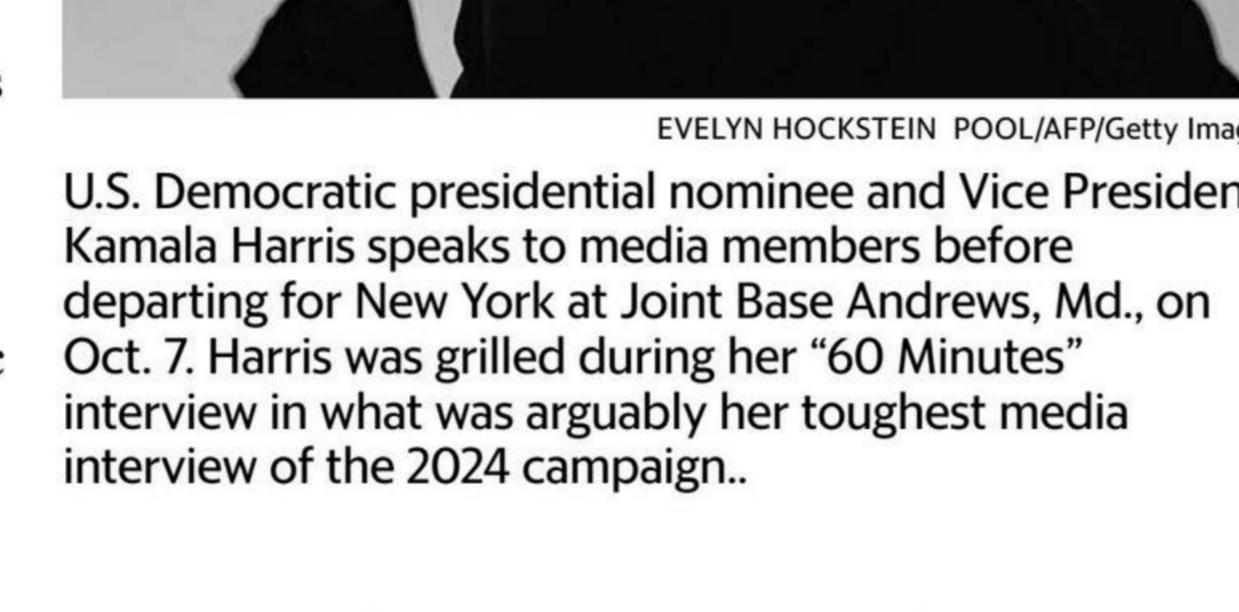
Harris has been criticized, by Republicans but also Democrats, for not sitting for tough interviews, especially with more traditional media outlets, since she became the Democratic vice presidential candidate, or avoiding them altogether.

Former President Donald Trump backed out of an appearance on "60 Minutes," citing a dispute over fact-checking.

Still, the most immediate problem for FEMA is finding enough people.

It's not just the top-line staff numbers that jump out. According to Monday's briefing, some of FEMA's most highly trained personnel, which are grouped into what the agency calls "cadres," are at particularly low levels.

As of Monday morning, of the 2,579 people who work in the agency's Individual Assistance cadre, four were available to deploy to Florida. Four of the 94 people who work in the safety cadre were available. And just one of the 1,201 people working in disaster survivor assistance could be dispatched.



EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/POOL/AP/GETTY IMAGES

U.S. Democratic presidential nominee and Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to media members before departing for New York at Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Oct. 7. Harris was grilled during her "60 Minutes" interview in what was arguably her toughest media interview of the 2024 campaign.

on social media reportedly accused the interview of being "propaganda" for Harris' campaign.

In the coming days, Harris will appear on "The View," Howard Stern's SiriusXM show, as well as on "Late Night with Stephen Colbert." These talks shows are known for their light-hearted or comedic interview styles, rather than the hard-hitting questions a political candidate might get on news network programming, though Harris is also scheduled to take part in a town hall event, hosted by Univision, in front of a Spanish-speaking audience in Las Vegas, Nevada, to be aired on October 10.

The move for Harris to appear on podcasts and late-night shows over traditional news interviews is seen as a way for her to deliver more off-the-cuff and unplanned remarks, rather than her usual campaign policies.

Veteran Democratic strategist James Carville said while this could be a risk, it's one the vice president may have to take in the final few weeks of the close election.

"It's a long-standing problem. And solutions are at hand. And from day one, literally, we have been offering solutions," Harris said.