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POLICE TRIAL SHOOTING VERDICT

OFFICERS SHOT MAN IN SELF-DEFENSE, LAWYERS SAY

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Article Text:

Two Cayce police officers who shot and killed a Richland County man last month fired in self-defense, prosecutors said Friday.

Videotape taken from a police cruiser and witness statements clearly indicate that Norris Lorenzo Lee, 33, fired at Sgt. Doug Curry and officer Joseph Hart several times before he was shot Jan. 26, said Assistant 11th Circuit Solicitor Tav Swarat. The officers have been cleared of any wrongdoing, he said.

"This all happened in the middle of a residential area," Swarat said.

Police Chief Charley McNair said the news was as good as could be expected.

"We never rejoice over the loss of a life," he said. "I guess the main thing is that I'm just glad our guys didn't get hit."

Deputy Lexington County coroner Tommy Jaco said Lee bled to death after being shot twice.

Police stopped Lee about 2 a.m. after they saw him driving a stolen vehicle. The cruiser video shows that Lee put the vehicle in reverse and rammed a cruiser, Swarat said.

Lee jumped out of the vehicle and fired several shots at the officers, Swarat said. Lee got back into the vehicle and drove off, and the police chased him, the video shows.

The fatal shooting happened near Walter Price Road and Foreman Street near the Cayce police department, officials said.

Lee was holding a gun when he again got out of the vehicle, Swarat said. The officers fired two or three shots at Lee as he turned toward them, hitting him in the lower torso and left leg, Swarat said.

"(The officers) tried to disable him," he said. "He went into cardiac arrest."

Earlier this week, Richland County sheriff's detectives linked at least nine robberies to Lee.

Ballistics tests show the gun Lee fired at Cayce police matches bullets and fragments found at several robberies reported Dec. 28 through Jan. 23 in Northeast Richland, said sheriff's spokesman Joseph Pellicci.

Richland County detectives became interested in Lee after they found out he had lived in the county, Pellicci said. Cayce police also found a ski mask in the stolen vehicle Lee was driving the morning he was shot, Pellicci said.

Several witnesses in the Richland County cases told detectives that the man who robbed them wore a ski mask, Pellicci said.

The robber threatened to kill several people, sometimes putting a gun to someone's neck or

chest. He demanded drugs, money and vehicles.

McNair said his department has a couple of robberies that might be linked to Lee. Detectives will now look at those cases since prosecutors have made their decision in the shooting, he said.

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