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Parolee killed in police gunfight

Author: ANDY DAVIS ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Article Text:

Two parolees were shot, one of them fatally, after one of them fired shots at law enforcement officers in Craighead County after running from a burning mobile home Monday afternoon, the Craighead County sheriff said.

Raymond Floyd was killed and Phillip Suftin was shot in the hip during the gunfight in a bean field east of Jonesboro, Sheriff Jack McCann said Monday night. Suftin was flown to UAMS Medical Center in Little Rock, McCann said, and likely will be charged with attempted capital murder.

McCann said Floyd's father told him, just before the shooting, that Floyd called his mother and told her "he was going to make the police kill him. He was not going back to prison."

"It was suicide by cop, I guess," McCann said.

The shooting occurred after a parole officer and a sheriff's deputy went to the mobile home looking for the parolees about 3 p.m.

When the officers got to the door, someone fired a shot at them, and the officers retreated and called for backup, McCann said. A few minutes later, the officers saw smoke coming from the mobile home and the parolees ran out the back door, he said. One of the parolees fired at the officers before both parolees ran into the field, McCann said.

Three deputies and a Jonesboro police officer drove around the field to cut the men off, McCann said. Floyd shot at the officers, and the deputies and the Jonesboro officer returned fire, McCann said.

After the shooting stopped, more than a dozen law enforcement officers surrounded the parolees in the field. At the officers' request, Suftin, who was unable to get up, signaled to them by raising his arm that Floyd had been killed. A deputy in a Mississippi County sheriff's office helicopter then verified from the air that Floyd appeared to have been killed. The officers then took Suftin into custody, McCann said.

McCann did not have any details on the men's convictions and didn't know why the parole officer was looking for them. A spokesman for the Department of Community Correction didn't return a call Monday evening.

The deputies involved were placed on administrative leave with pay and will be offered counseling, McCann said. The Arkansas State Police will investigate the shooting and submit its findings to the Craighead County prosecutor's office for a decision on whether the shooting was justified, he said.

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