Pauls Valley Daily Democrat (OK)
July 19, 2011
Section: News

Man's shooting death still has questions

Author: Barry Porterfield; Pauls Valley Democrat The Democrat

Article Text:

Pauls Valley, Oklahoma — Plenty of questions remain about an Arkansas man's actions that led to a weekend pursuit throughout parts of Garvin County and ultimately his shooting death when he used a knife to threaten some area police officers.

Fatally shot one time in the chest was 29-year-old Paul Chester of Springdale, Ark., during a confrontation early Saturday morning with Maysville and Elmore City police officers and a county deputy in a field near Antioch a few miles west of Pauls Valley.

Garvin County Sheriff Larry Rhodes said Monday the actions of the officers, especially Maysville officer Steve Huffman, who fired the shot killing Chester, were appropriate because the subject had a knife while moving aggressively toward Huffman and others at the scene.

"The officer did what he had to do," Rhodes said.

"They pled with him and asked him to comply. He made a motion toward one of the officers and the officer fired his weapon striking the subject," he said.

One of the big questions about Chester centers around why he was in the Garvin County and Pauls Valley area in the first place considering he has no ties to here.

Neither Rhodes or Pauls Valley Assistant Police Chief Derrick Jolley have the answer at this time.

"We haven't come up with a reason why he was here," Jolley said.

According to Rhodes, Chester was seen in Arkansas on Thursday as some here are speculating he might have been passing through this area on his way to Dallas, Texas where some of his family reside.

As for Huffman, Maysville Police Chief Adam McMillen also described his officer's actions as justified.

He stresses it's only protocol after an officer related shooting and does not reflect on Huffman that he was placed on administrative leave for a few days.

"It's not a disciplinary leave," McMillen said.

"It's just routine. When he's ready to come back he'll come back," the chief said.

The events leading to Chester's death actually began after Pauls Valley police were called early Saturday to the Apple Valley Apartments on the west side of PV near Indian Meridian Road about a subject beating on residents' doors.

Responding officers learned the subject, who had damaged a door and actually went into an apartment, had already left the scene. When the subject returned officers attempted to stop his vehicle, a 2006 Hummer, as he was again attempting to leave.

"The subject was non-compliant with the officer's commands and it wound up in a physical confrontation," Jolley said.

The subject was able to get back to his vehicle and after a short pursuit flee the Pauls Valley area.

A short time later a Maysville officer attempted to stop the Hummer driven by Chester after it was learned the vehicle and suspect were wanted after the Pauls Valley incident.

From there Chester took a number of police officers and a deputy on a pursuit that went up into neighboring McClain County before returning through Maysville and toward Elmore City.

After getting off onto a county road the pursued vehicle came to an abrupt halt when it crashed into a fence near Antioch.

“He got out of his car armed with a knife, and he would not comply with commands from the officers,” Rhodes said.

Officers later said Chester walked about 200 yards into a field where it looked like he started pacing in a semi-circle. A taser was then deployed on Chester but failed to stop the subject.

At one point Chester stopped and faced the five officers at the scene — McMillen, Huffman, Elmore City Police Chief Bryann Barnett, EC reserve officer Les Fowler and county deputy Paul Luna.

Huffman was holding what was described as a large box cutter type knife with the blade extended several inches.

In aggressive manner, Huffman moved toward Huffman and possibly one other officer when he was shot, Rhodes said.

Chester was later pronounced dead at the scene by a Pauls Valley ambulance crew. He was taken to the state medical examiner’s office as the investigation into the shooting is now being led by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation at the request of the sheriff.

Copyright 2011, Pauls Valley Daily Democrat / Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc. (CNHI). All Rights Reserved.