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Man shot dead had knife, investigators say

3rd deputy-involved slaying in 2 weeks

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Article Text:

A man shot to death by a sheriff's sergeant after a 15-mile chase Tuesday afternoon had a knife as he advanced toward deputies, one of whom was on the ground, sheriff's investigators said yesterday.

The dead man was identified yesterday as Dennis Lee Dunn, 26, of Lemon Grove. The sergeant who fired the fatal shots was identified as Walter Ogle, a 24-year veteran with the department who has been working in rural patrol for a decade.

It was the third fatal shooting involving a sheriff's deputy in less than two weeks.

According to the department, deputies began following Dunn's 1985 Volkswagen Cabriolet after getting a report of a suspicious vehicle in the area that was possibly involved in a drug deal.

Deputies from Campo and Pine Valley were following Dunn's vehicle for 15 miles before a deputy disabled it with a spike strip just before Dunn could leave Buckman Springs Road and get on Interstate 8, said sheriff's homicide Lt. Jerry Lewis.

"It wasn't a high-speed pursuit, but it was clear that he was not going to yield," Lewis said.

As patrol cars pulled up on either side of the disabled vehicle, Dunn jumped out, first confronting Ogle and then a deputy, who slipped and fell as Dunn was approaching him, Lewis said.

Ogle, with gun drawn, ordered Dunn to stop. Instead, Dunn turned on Ogle, Lewis said.

"The sergeant saw what appeared to be a flash of metal that appeared to be a knife in the suspect's hand," Lewis said.

Still refusing to stop, Dunn was 10 feet from Ogle when the sergeant fired four shots, Lewis said. Dunn fell at Ogle's feet, mortally wounded. Paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene.

A Kershaw-brand folding knife with its blade out was found beneath Dunn's body, Lewis said.

Dunn's death was the third fatal shooting in the county in the last two weeks in which sheriff's deputies were involved.

Hassan Ibrahim, a San Diego teen from Somalia who had been suffering from mental illness, was shot dead by Deputy Richard E. Phillips on Nov. 2 after a chase into downtown San Diego. Investigators said Ibrahim, who had never driven before, was trying to drive the wrong way onto Interstate 5 when he was shot.

Later that day in Borrego Springs, sheriff's Sgt. Bruce Fulton was among four law enforcement officers who shot and killed 26-year-old Jason Dixon after a \$177,000 bank robbery.

Another deputy, Scott Dawson, tried 10 times to subdue Dixon with nonlethal "pepper balls," but to no avail. Dixon then fired three to six shots at the officers before they returned fire, killing him.

All three deputies who fired the fatal shots are on administrative leave pending the outcome of investigations by both the Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Office, said sheriff's Lt. Ron VanRaaphorst.

Also, "there's an automatic psychiatric review," he said.

"I can't even begin to tell what a traumatic thing this is, on all sides," VanRaaphorst said. "I know two of these deputies personally; these are guys who were starting to look toward retirement.

"This is the last thing on Earth you want to be involved in."