

Laredo Morning Times (TX)

March 11, 2015

Section: Local

Sisters tried to escape

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Dateline: Laredo, TX

Article Text:

The 67-year-old man who gunned down two young sisters Monday as they tried to escape from him in their home had no criminal record, but police said he had been “acting strangely” the past couple of months and was experiencing financial problems.

The man, whom police identified Tuesday as Juan Antonio Torres, lived next door to the girls in the 1800 block of Convent Avenue. LPD identified the sisters as Anel Martinez, 16, and Allysson Martinez, 6.

Torres was acquainted with their family, LPD said.

“He was having financial difficulties and the Martinez family was trying to help him out.

They do have a friendship with him,” said LPD Chief Ray Garner during a news conference Tuesday.

Escape attempt

On Monday afternoon, Torres went inside the home after being allowed in and began talking to the mother of the two children.

LPD said Torres was demanding that the family give him \$3,000.

“During the conversation, at some point, Torres pulled his weapon, a .38-caliber revolver,” Garner said.

Police said the mother escaped unharmed through the front of the house and was attempting to call 911.

Her two children made their way to the backyard, attempting to escape.

“Torres followed them out and shot them multiple times.

We do know by the number of shots the young ladies received, he had to have emptied his weapon at one time and then reload it,” Garner said.

After shooting the two girls, he went back inside the house.

The girls’ 83-year-old grandfather was in the home and had locked himself in a room. Their father was at work.

LPD responded to the scene at about 3:45 p.m. after receiving reports of shots fired.

In the line of fire

The officers who first arrived at the scene said Torres shot at them. No one was harmed.

While scouting the area, officers spotted the two girls in the backyard.

Garner said the officers jumped over the fence and put themselves in the line of fire.

“While securing the scene, we had approximately five officers who placed their life in danger to extract two little girls ... from the backyard.

They had been shot multiple times,” Garner said.

“Had Torres gone to the rear of the house, these officers would’ve been in trouble.”

LPD said it attempted to negotiate with Torres to no avail. Right around 5 p.m., Torres exited the

front door and pointed his gun at a group of officers, LPD said.

Three officers shot six times, fatally striking Torres twice, police said.

The three officers who opened fire and killed Torres have been placed on administrative reassignment, pending the outcome of criminal and internal investigations.

LPD officers and paramedics were able to get the two girls to the ambulance.

They were rushed to Laredo Medical Center, where they were pronounced dead.

"This is a very tragic day for the City of Laredo.

Two young children were shot and died because of an individual.

Our condolences go after the Martinez family and also for the Torres family," Garner said.

"If you take a look at it, there had been thousands of people who had been affected by this shooting. Their friends are affected.

The whole neighborhood is affected. Our officers, their lives have changed."

Police said the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is assisting LPD in tracing the revolver to see where it came from.

Social Media

During the news conference, Investigator Joe E. Baeza took time to clarify wrongful information circulating around social media indicating that the father was the suspect.

That was far from the truth since the dad was at work.

Other posted comments there saying there had been a chase and that the shooter killed the girls because police went after him.

That was wrong too, Baeza said.

"We need to take a step in relationship to what's being perpetuated on social media, especially when you're out at these locations taking videos," Baeza said.

"Our base concern was the violent video that was taped of the girls being carried out.

What needs to be kept in mind is if that was my family member, if that was my child being carried out by first responders, would I want that perpetuating over and over again on social media."

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