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Man with knife shot, killed
Dead man was mentally ill; Somalis outraged
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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Article Text:

Nasir Abdi was considered dangerous because he had stopped taking his psychiatric medication, so Franklin County deputy sheriffs were called to take him back to treatment. But their efforts ended tragically yesterday after Abdi refused to go and lunged at the deputies with a knife. Mace didn't stop him, and when he lunged again, one of the deputies shot him. The 23-year-old Somali immigrant was declared dead at 1:31 p.m. at Grant Medical Center. "A knife is one of the most deadly weapons we come up against," said Lt. Brent Mull, a Columbus police spokesman. He said he didn't know what kind of knife it was. But members of the Somali community who live in the same Northeast Side apartment complex on Cassady Avenue question why Deputy Jason Evans fired the fatal shot, especially since Abdi had a history of delusions.

A crowd gathered at the scene yesterday, some yelling at Columbus police officers called after the shooting.

"Cold-blooded killers!" screamed Ali Isse, a friend of Abdi's. "There is no justice."

Officers tried to move the crowd back into their apartments, but they refused to leave or even step back as police extended crime tape to block off an area near the shooting.

"I've seen a lot of people die," Isse said. "I came (to the U.S.) not to see another person die." More police gathered to try to calm the ruckus.

"They just want to push us back. They have to tell us the truth: Why did he shoot him?" asked Farhiya Mohamed.

Leaders of the Somali Justice Advocacy Center in St. Paul, Minn., plan to come to Columbus next week to discuss the situation after being flooded with calls yesterday, Executive Director Omar Jamal said.

"This could have been prevented," he said.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul area dealt with a similar issue in 2002, when six Minneapolis police officers fatally shot a machete-wielding Somali man who was mentally ill, Jamal said.

The four Franklin County deputies, two in uniform and two in plain clothes, had approached Abdi about 1 p.m. He was smoking on the sidewalk in front of 3079 Cassady Village Trail.

All four deputies involved in the incident are on leave pending an investigation. Mull said it appeared the deputies took the right steps, using Mace first and trying to coax Abdi into a peaceful surrender.

The deputies in plain clothes were not named. As for the uniformed ones, Evans has been on

the force for seven years, and Deputy Mike Wiley, who used the Mace, eight.

Abdi's death was at least the second this year at the hands of a law-enforcement officer in Franklin County. In July, a Columbus SWAT officer killed a bank robber in Worthington.

The order for Abdi to be taken to NetCare, a psychiatric center, had been issued yesterday after a health-care worker said he was mentally ill and "a danger to himself or others," said William Reddington, chief magistrate of Franklin County Probate Court. It's unclear what his illness was. A judge ordered Abdi to Twin Valley Behavioral Center in 2002 during a theft and vandalism case. By May of that year, Judge David E. Cain signed an order allowing doctors to force-feed medicines to Abdi.

Cain dismissed the criminal charges on July 17, 2002, after doctors reported that Abdi was not competent to stand trial and was "not restorable."

Abdi emigrated from Somalia to the United States in 1999 with his family, living first in Tennessee, then moving to Columbus in 2000. About a year later, Abdi started showing signs of mental illness, said his brother Liban Abdi, 21.

"He would say the television was made by the devil, cars were made by the devil."

Abdi had been hospitalized for six months this year at Twin Valley Medical Center and was released about three months ago, Liban Abdi said.

At first, his brother was taking his medication, but he stopped after complaining that it made him feel weak and caused him to sleep a lot, Abdi said.

The delusions returned. He heard voices at night.

Police would not say where Nasir Abdi was shot. A witness said he was shot in the chest.

"They could have wounded him," Liban Abdi said. "They could have shot him in the leg, in the arm, anything else."

Dispatch reporter Bruce Cadwallader and Assistant City Editor Rob Messinger contributed to this story.

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Caption:

(1) TOM DODGE| DISPATCH

A Columbus police officer escorts residents of the Cassady Village Apartments past the site where a man was shot to death. Franklin County deputy sheriffs said the man lunged at them with a knife and that other attempts to subdue him failed.

(2) Map

Photo, MAP

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