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Shooting ends in standoff, suicide

Author: Bill Gallo Jr.

Staff Writer

Article Text:

PENNSVILLE TWP. - A man suspected of shooting two women in the head - including his ex-girlfriend - outside a Wilmington, Del., nightclub, held police at bay here for several hours before killing himself early Saturday morning, authorities said.

Michael Moriarty, 25, of Elsinboro, allegedly gunned down the women, both from Salem County, and then fled back to Deepwater where the standoff began.

According to Wilmington Police, they received call at 1:20 a.m. Saturday about a shooting in the parking lot of the Red Room nightclub, in the 500 block of South Madison Street, along Wilmington's riverfront. There they found two women - one 22 years old from Pennsville and the other 26 years old from Penns Grove who had been wounded. The suspect had fled the scene. Authorities then began piecing together what had taken place.

Prior to the shooting, authorities say, Moriarty left a bar in Pennsville Township, believed to be Leanna's Tavern on Broadway in Deepwater, to find his ex-girlfriend. Moriarty had a friend drive him to the nightclub, where Moriarty saw the woman's car outside.

Moriarty then called the woman on a cell phone and the ex-girlfriend and one of her friends exited the nightclub where they met Moriarty in the parking lot. After a brief discussion, Moriarty is alleged to have shot his ex-girlfriend in the head and then shot at her again as she fell to the ground. The ex-girlfriend's female friend attempted to flee, but was shot by Moriarty in the back of the head.

At this point, police say, Moriarty got back into the vehicle he had been riding in and ordered his unidentified friend at gunpoint to drive him back to New Jersey. Once the driver dropped Moriarty off near the tavern, the driver immediately called Wilmington Police to tell them what had just taken place.

Around 2:08 a.m. Saturday, Wilmington Police Department detectives called Pennsville Police and requested assistance in locating Moriarty.

When police arrived in the area of Leanna's Tavern in Deepwater, they found Moriarty on Pine Street near the bar. According to authorities, when Moriarty saw officers he put a gun to his head and he threatened to kill himself. Officers were able to talk Moriarty off of Pine Street and into the vacant parking lot of the nearby Deepwater Post Office.

Moriarty settled near the loading dock at the back of the post office and authorities attempted through the early morning hours to persuade him to surrender. The standoff, which lasted nearly five hours, ended at 6:43 a.m. when Moriarty shot himself once in the head, authorities said.

Authorities declined to release the names of the two women, but the mother of the one victim, Bobbi Jean Hiner, 22, the ex-girlfriend of Moriarty, told the Times her daughter remained in critical condition late Saturday afternoon at Christiana Hospital in Stanton, Del.

"She's strong and she's a survivor," Debbie Hiner of Alloway said of her daughter. "We're very optimistic she'll pull through. If anybody can make it through something like this, it's her."

Debbie Hiner said her daughter had an active restraining order against Moriarty. She also said that Moriarty had threatened her daughter and the Hiner family.

Debbie Hiner said her daughter had been shot in the face and suffered a shattered jaw. She said doctors told the family the next three days will be critical to her outlook. Bobbi Jean Hiner's friend did not receive as serious a wound as her daughter and was in good condition, according to Debbie Hiner.

Bobbi Jean Hiner had worked at a beverage company in Delaware, her mother said.

The gun Moriarty allegedly used in the shootings in Wilmington and to take his own life was a .38 caliber handgun, according to one police source.

The Deepwater Post Office is located in the heart of the village at the corner of Broadway and Pine Street.

During the standoff, the village of Deepwater was mostly sealed off by police from the Route 130 overpass to Route 140.

Responding to the scene along with Pennsville Police and Wilmington Police Department detectives were the Salem County Prosecutor's Office, the New Jersey State Police's (Team's) Unit, Pennsville Ambulance, Salem County field communications vehicle and the Lower Alloways Creek K-9 Unit, Carneys Point Police and Delaware River and Bay Authority Police. By mid-morning the crime scene had been cleared.

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