

Fresno Bee, The (CA)

November 1, 2003

Edition: FINAL

Section: LOCAL NEWS

Page: B1

Topics:

Index Terms:

11/3/2003

Tulare deputy shoots suspect

Officer feared man would run him over with car.

Author: *Diwata Fonte THE FRESNO BEE*

Article Text:

A Tulare County sheriff's deputy shot a parolee in the Valley's third officer-involved shooting this week, and the South Valley's third such shooting in October.

About 1:50 p.m. Friday, the officer pulled over **Steve Levitre**, 41, during a traffic stop on Plano Street south of Highway 190 near Porterville.

The officer recognized the man as someone who had made threats on his life, according to a department spokeswoman, Lt. Donna Perry.

"The officer ordered him to put his hands where he could see him," Perry said. "The suspect did not comply and reached down as if he was reaching for weapon."

She said the officer drew his gun, and Levitre continued to act as if he was reaching for a weapon.

Levitre, who was still in his car, began to accelerate his car toward the officer.

Fearing Levitre would run him over with his car, the officer fired his gun twice at the man, striking him in the upper body.

Officers refused to release the name of the deputy who shot him.

The officer was placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation. His name will be released at a later time, officials said.

Levitre was treated for his injuries at Sierra View District Hospital in Porterville.

Levitre was being transferred to University Medical Center in Fresno, and his condition was unknown.

Perry said detectives found a knife in Levitre's right boot.

He was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder and violating parole.

Three people have died in the four other officer-involved shootings in the region during October.

Tuesday, California Highway Patrol officers shot and killed the driver of a stolen truck in northwest Fresno.

Two officers stopped **David Grajiola**, 36, driving a Toyota pickup right before midnight.

When they learned the truck was stolen, an officer attempted to arrest the man by holding him through the truck's open door.

The suspect put the truck in reverse and dragged the officer on the pavement.

When the suspect began to drive forward toward the other officer, he shot and killed the suspect.

On Sunday, Fresno police shot an unarmed man three times, once in the back, killing him.

Demetre Omar Hall, 23, fled the scene of a shooting outside a nightclub and led police on a high-speed chase.

After he ran his car into a field, he fled on foot.

Although Hall did not have a gun, police thought he pointed a deadly weapon at them.

Witnesses say Hall was running when police shot him.

A Hanford police officer shot and wounded a man Oct. 20, after he fought with police as they tried to arrest him.

Officers tried to arrest Joseph Cole on suspicion of violating parole, robbery, false imprisonment and domestic violence, Hanford police said.

Cole ran as officers tried to arrest him, officials said. Officers chased Cole, but lost sight of him before one officer found him hiding in a yard.

Cole fought with the officer, and during the struggle, the officer shot Cole in the left shoulder.

On Oct. 13, police serving a drug warrant shot and killed a 26-year-old Strathmore woman inside a Lindsay apartment where she was staying with friends.

An officer fatally shot **Jennifer Lynn LeBlanc** at close range, after they forced their way into the apartment's bathroom.

The reporter can be reached at dfonte@fresnobee.com or 622-2419.

Copyright (c) 2003 The Fresno Bee