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Fatal shots defended in Gwinnett

Police report that man pointed a gun at officers.

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Article Text:

A 32-year-old Gwinnett County man shot dead by two police officers was pointing a rifle at the officers just before he was shot, police said Friday. Two of the man's family members were later arrested at the scene after learning of his death.

Officers were called to a home in the 500 block of Trophy Trail, off Five Forks Trickum Road, about 6:30 p.m. after receiving a call about a man threatening suicide, said Cpl. Jake Smith, a spokesman for the Gwinnett County Police Department. The caller said a man, later identified as James Clark, had already cut himself and had fired two shots, Smith said.

When officers arrived at the home, they were confronted by a man, later identified as James Clark, who had a weapon, Smith said.

"It appeared to be a deer rifle with a scope," Smith said.

Officers attempted to negotiate with Clark on the driveway of the home for 15 minutes, and at one point, he set the rifle down. But he then picked it up again and climbed on the roof of a car while yelling at officers, Smith said Friday.

When Clark began walking toward two officers while pointing the rifle at them, the officers fired shots, killing Clark shortly after 7 p.m., Smith said.

"There came a time when the officers felt threatened," he said.

Although family members claimed that the gun was a BB or pellet gun, officers confirmed late Thursday that it was Remington 721 deer rifle, Smith said.

A man who identified himself as Robert Clark, James Clark's brother, said his brother was not suicidal, and that officers did not have to open fire.

"I don't know what happened," an emotional Robert Clark said. "I just know he's dead."

James Clark lived in the home with a girlfriend and roommate and had a 3-year-old daughter, Robert Clark said. No one was in the home at the time of the shooting, police said.

Family members were kept away from the shooting scene as police investigated Thursday night.

A man identified as the Clarks' father, 65-year-old Thomas Clark, pulled up in a sedan and began shouting at officers about his dead son.

"Who shot him?" Thomas Clark shouted. "Who killed him?"

Both Thomas and Robert Clark, 34, were yelling obscenities at officers for several minutes until they were each handcuffed and taken away from the scene.

"This is the worst thing imaginable for a parent," Smith said.

Both were charged with disorderly conduct and booked into the Gwinnett County Jail, where their bond was set at \$135 each, according to booking records. They were released shortly

before 1 a.m. Friday, jail records show.

The two officers involved in the shooting have been placed on routine administrative leave pending an investigation, Smith said.

Staff writer Angel K. Brooks contributed to this article.

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