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Deputy hit, man killed trading fire

Lawman stopping car is shot 6 times

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Article Text:

A Lonoke County sheriff's deputy survived being shot six times as he returned fire and killed a man early Thursday during a traffic stop near Cabot.

Deputy Vernon Williams of Lonoke was wearing a bullet-resistant vest that was pelted by three slugs.

But he was shot in the hand, elbow and leg.

Williams was being treated at Rebsamen Regional Medical Center in Jacksonville, where he was listed in stable condition and expected to make a full recovery, said Doug Estes, special agent with the Arkansas State Police, which is investigating the shooting.

"It appears that the suspect fired first," Estes said of Gregory J. Isobaker Jr., 21, of Jacksonville. The shooting occurred shortly after Williams stopped a car for bearing a false license tag about 2:30 a.m. near U.S. 67/167 and Arkansas 5, according to a state police report.

Sheriff's Sgt. James Kulesa said none of the deputies he has known or worked with would ever be expected to survive such a shooting.

"Somebody was watching over him," he said.

"He is a decent guy, and I believe decent guys are looked after." After Williams was shot, he managed to call dispatchers and provide them with precise information, Kulesa said.

"Nobody can say how they would react until they're in it," Kulesa said.

No one else was injured in the shooting.

Keo Constable Michael Hughes was riding along with Williams at the time.

"I won't be able to comment," Hughes said.

After pulling over the car, Williams asked the driver, an unidentified woman, as well as Isobaker and two other women to get out of the car so he could search the vehicle, state police Lt. Henry Lamar said Thursday.

"When he was conducting a search of the vehicle, he and the suspect got into a tussle on the ground," Lamar said.

Isobaker pulled out a .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol while the men were rolling on the ground and started shooting.

Both men then got to their feet and started firing at each other "at close range," Lamar said.

When state police arrived, Isobaker was lying dead in the middle of the entrance ramp of the highway with multiple gunshot wounds in the upper body.

Kulesa said he talked to Williams several hours after the shooting and said the wounded deputy was in good spirits.

"He's doing OK," Kulesa said. "We're glad he's OK."

Williams, a deputy at the sheriff's office since June, is a former England police officer and was

an officer in Oklahoma before coming to Arkansas, Kulesa said.

Investigators said they will wait a couple of days before interviewing Williams because "he's medicated pretty good right now," Estes said.

The three women in the car with Isobaker were interviewed and released Thursday. Their names weren't released.

A case file will be handed over to the Lonoke County prosecuting attorney to determine whether to pursue any charges against them, Estes said.

The sheriff 's office and Cabot Police Department are helping state police with the investigation.

Williams is expected to be discharged from the hospital today, Kulesa said.

"It's amazing," Kulesa said. "Bulletproof vests are great, they protect your life, but you're not protected from head to toe. It's pretty amazing, and a lot of the guys are talking about it."

Information for this story was contributed by Amy Upshaw of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Caption:

Isobaker

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