

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)

May 18, 2007

Edition: Main; The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Section: Metro News

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metroatlantastory

Police chase ends in woman's death

Cobb investigates to see if pursuit broke any rules

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Article Text:

Police in Cobb County are investigating a high-speed chase Thursday that led to the death of a 63-year-old woman from Woodstock.

Officers were chasing a station wagon on I-575 in northern Cobb County when it crossed the grassy median and drove into the southbound lanes, police said. The station wagon hit a Buick, causing it to roll over. The wreck killed the Buick's driver, Barbara T. Robbins, and injured two of her passengers.

Officer Wayne Delk, a spokesman for the department, said the chase is "under investigation. Until we get more information that's all we can say now."

The Police Department's policy on vehicle chases changed in December. It says officers may chase only if they have probable cause to suspect that the person being pursued has committed or is about to commit "murder, armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, aggravated battery and aggravated assault or any act that creates an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to another person."

The chase began in north Cobb County after a resident of Fernvalley Road called police to report a suspicious vehicle -- a Chevrolet station wagon -- backed up at a neighbor's house. Police saw the station wagon at Barrett Parkway and tried to pull it over. When the driver sped onto northbound I-575, officers chased him, said Officer Cassie Reece, a police spokeswoman. During the chase, a big-screen TV fell from the back of the station wagon.

Police in several squad cars tried to hem in the driver by forming a box around him, but they were unable to contain him. The station wagon sped up, crossed a grassy median and hit Robbins' Buick.

A helicopter took two of her passengers -- Kathleen Kinney, 66, and James Kinney, 81 -- to Atlanta Medical Center with serious injuries. Robbins' daughter, Deadra Gouger, 37, of Canton suffered minor injuries. Gouger's 2-year-old daughter, Tatiana, was unhurt. Reece said.

Police detained two suspects but did not immediately charge or publicly identify them.

Until December, the Cobb County Police Department allowed officers "to use all reasonable means in order to apprehend a fleeing violator," according to a policy manual dated December 2004.

"The primary consideration during a vehicle pursuit will be that of safety, both of the officer and

the community," the old policy said.

Departments nationwide have modified chase policies because of injuries to citizens and officers.

In April the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Timothy Scott, who was a Coweta County sheriff's deputy in March 2001 when he rammed his patrol car into a fleeing black Cadillac after a chase.

The driver, Victor Harris, who was 19 then, slid down an embankment and crashed. Harris was paralyzed. He sued Scott and the sheriff's office, but, in an 8-1 ruling, the Supreme Court protected police from lawsuits resulting from such chases.

"A police officer's attempt to terminate a dangerous high-speed car chase that threatens the lives of innocent bystanders does not violate the Fourth Amendment, even when it places the fleeing motorist at risk of serious injury or death," wrote Justice Antonin Scalia.

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Savannah Morning News (GA)

June 23, 2007

Edition: HOME

Section: COASTAL EMPIRE

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CRIME SHOOTING POLICE

POLICE IDENTIFY 2ND MAN IN SHOOTING

OMAR 'PEANUT' BAKER SOUGHT FOR QUESTIONING IN MAY 30 INCIDENT INVOLVING OFFICER CHRIS TALLEY

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Article Text:

Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department investigators want to question Jaquez Omar "Peanut" Baker, 20, about a shooting four weeks ago that involved an SCMPD officer.

That shooting, in which police said two men fired on Officer Chris Talley near the intersection of Waters Avenue and Bolton Street, occurred about 12 hours before an unrelated police shooting in which a fleeing suspect was killed. An SCMPD officer later was arrested in that slaying.

On Friday, Police Chief Michael Berkow and CrimeStoppers announced a \$5,000 reward for information leading to Baker's arrest. That's double the usual amount, and SCMPD chipped in the extra money.

Police allege Baker and another man, identified as Nathaniel "Boo Daddy" Black, fired on Talley after being involved in two prior shootings with unknown suspects. One occurred near the westside Bradley Point subdivision, and the other occurred at Montgomery Street and DeRenne Avenue.

A police lieutenant witnessed the second shooting and alerted officers in the area. Talley waited on Waters Avenue for the suspects' vehicle and pursued it. Black and Baker crashed a Pontiac sedan into a tree, climbed out and exchanged gunfire with the officer.

Baker fled, according to police, but Black was found with a gunshot wound a short distance from the scene.

Berkow said Friday that forensic testing has not been initiated, and investigators might never know whether Talley shot Black or if he was injured in one of the earlier shootings.

"He was involved in three gunfights, so it's not absolutely clear to me who exactly shot him," Berkow said.

An internal investigation into Talley firing his gun cleared the officer of any wrongdoing, said Sgt. Mike Wilson, police spokesman. Berkow praised the officer's conduct a few hours after the shooting.

"Officer Talley showed good police work. He was a proactive investigator," Berkow said at the time.

Baker is wanted only for questioning in the police-related shooting. A warrant for his arrest in the crime has not been obtained.

However, records show an arrest warrant has been issued for him on an alleged probation violation.

Friday's public announcement of SCMPD's interest in Baker was meant to draw attention to the case, Berkow said.

"We believe that both Black and Baker fired at Officer Talley and attempted to kill him," said Berkow during a Friday morning news conference. "We believe people in the community know where Mr. Baker is staying. ... They know more about this crime."

Berkow said Black has not cooperated in the investigation and remains locked up at the Chatham County jail.

Catherine Neal, public information assistant for CrimeStoppers, said the telephone hotline is meant for just this sort of situation.

"It's a tool for the community and law enforcement," Neal said. "No matter how small the detail, the public can help solve a crime if they just call."

ABOUT BAKER

Baker stands 5-feet-7 inches tall and weighs between 140 and 150 pounds. Police say he resides in the area of 40th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. He has a warrant for probation violation and is considered armed and dangerous.

Memo:

MAKE THE CALL

A reward of up to \$5,000 is available from CrimeStoppers for credible, anonymous information leading to the arrest of Jaquez Omar "Peanut" Baker. Call 912-234-2020. Calls are not traced, and codes allow callers to claim their money without disclosing their identities.

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