

MINNEAPOLIS

# Minneapolis police officer relieved of duty pending outcome of investigation

Efrem Hamilton is the subject of complaints for firing his service gun after a car accidentally backed into his squad car.

By **Libor Jany** (<http://www.startribune.com/libor-jany/219430401/>) Star Tribune |

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A Minneapolis police officer has been relieved of duty pending the outcome of an internal probe into a Nov. 20 episode in which he fired one shot at a vehicle that had inadvertently rammed his squad car, police union officials confirmed Thursday.

Union president Lt. Bob Kroll said that the officer, Efrem Hamilton, was relieved of duty on Wednesday “pending an investigation,” but declined to provide details about the nature of the inquiry. Hamilton previously had been placed on paid administrative leave.

Kroll said Hamilton, whom he called a respected officer and former Marine, is likely to be questioned by Internal Affairs investigators next week concerning his role in the shooting, which happened during a downtown scuffle just after bar-closing.

A spokesman for the Hennepin County attorney’s office said Thursday afternoon that the case had been sent to his office for possible prosecution but had been sent back for “additional investigation.”

“It’s not unusual for cases to come to us and we think that there’s a couple more things that it needs and send it back,” said the spokesman, Chuck Laszewski.

He wouldn’t comment on whether charges are being considered.

The internal investigation followed the filing of complaints with the city by the six people who were in the vehicle. They accused the officer of acting improperly by firing his service handgun at their car.

Hamilton was responding to the scene of a large brawl-turned-shooting near Target Field, authorities said.

But when a car that was trying to back away from the chaotic scene struck his squad, he fired a single round at the vehicle, hitting its side. No one was hurt.

Departmental insiders said it was not uncommon for criminal charges to be weighed against an officer who discharges his weapon under similar circumstances.

They pointed to a 2015 incident in which a policeman was investigated by Internal Affairs after he fired at a suspected shoplifter who tried to run him over outside of the Cub Foods in south Minneapolis’ Windom neighborhood.

Minneapolis City Council Member Blong Yang, chairman of the Public Safety committee, declined to comment, saying he hadn’t been briefed on the Internal Affairs probe. Police department officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday afternoon.

Several community groups, including the Minneapolis NAACP and the Twin Cities Coalition for Justice, have called for the officer to be punished, holding several demonstrations in the weeks since the shooting.

Another rally is planned for Friday afternoon on the second floor of the county Government Center.

Staff writer Liz Sawyer contributed to this report.

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