

Questions remain about fatal shooting and collision

- Minneapolis police chief cited investigation, desire to keep attention on awards ceremony.

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Three days after a chain of events in Uptown left two people dead and two Minneapolis police officers injured, authorities Monday declined to answer questions that would fill in crucial blank spots about what happened and what role officers played.

On Friday, a burglary suspect was shot and killed during an altercation with two officers, who were shot in the legs. A police vehicle responding to the scene 30-plus minutes after the shooting collided with a motorcyclist, killing the driver and injuring his passenger.

Council Member Meg Tuthill said she has been fielding many questions from residents in her Uptown ward and canceled a monthly constituent lunch on Monday after realizing there "would be a million questions that I can't answer for them."

Police Chief Janeé Harteau declined Monday to speak directly about the incidents, using most of the day to kick off the department's National Police Week activities, including an awards ceremony and visits to precinct stations.

Harteau said she wasn't answering questions because of the ongoing investigation into the shooting death of Terrance T. Franklin, 22, and a desire to keep attention on those who had just received commendations for heroic work in 2012.

"I do want to concentrate on the heroism and those that we honored

Shooting continues on B5 ►

Questions still unanswered

◀ SHOOTING FROM BI

here today," she told a group of reporters gathered for the ceremony at the department's special operations center in north Minneapolis.

Franklin's girlfriend, Ashley Martin, 21, asked Monday for more information, telling TV stations outside police headquarters that Franklin didn't have a gun and she is suspicious about what happened.

Police released information about the incidents over the weekend and on Friday, including a news conference in which Harteau answered questions Friday night.

The department said Franklin was a suspected burglar with a lengthy arrest history who fled police at about 2 p.m. Friday. He crashed his vehicle into a police squad, nearly ran over an officer's foot and then crashed his vehicle again, fleeing on foot. He was eventually located in a house at 2717 Bryant Av. S., where he attacked a police dog that had been sent into the house to capture him.

Several more officers then entered the house before shots were fired, killing Franklin and injuring the officers, Michael Meath and Ricardo Muro, both of whom are members of the SWAT team. Police said Franklin fought with the officers in the moments before he was shot and reached for an officer's MP5 submachine gun. Police have not said who shot whom, if any other weapons were involved, or if Franklin was armed.

He died at 3:35 p.m. on Friday in the basement of the house, according to police. An autopsy report said he had been shot several times.

More than 30 minutes after the shooting, after the wounded officers were at the hospital, a squad vehicle responding to the shooting crashed with a motorcyclist nine blocks west of the shooting at Blaisdell Avenue S. and 26th Street. Police said it had its siren and emergency lights on.

Motorcyclist Ivan Romero Olivares, 24, died at the scene; his passenger, Joselin Torrejon-Villamil, survived and was treated for injuries at Hennepin County Medical Center.

A department spokeswoman

said that, according to witnesses, accident reconstruction and video, the police vehicle was traveling "well below the posted speed limit." But a witness who spoke to police told the Star Tribune that the police squad was traveling above the speed limit, perhaps as fast as 50 miles per hour shortly before entering the intersection. A second witness who also spoke to police told the Star Tribune she couldn't estimate the police vehicle's speed because she was pulling out of the police officer's way when the squad passed and didn't pay attention.

The motorcycle struck the rear passenger side of the police vehicle, according to the department. The department hasn't said who had the green light at the intersection, but two witnesses who were interviewed by the Police Department have told the Star Tribune that the police vehicle went through a red light.

The Minneapolis police manual describes how police should respond to emergencies, saying they "shall exercise caution and due consideration for the safety of the public." The manual, which governs police protocol, says that while Minnesota law exempts officers from traffic statutes, "the use of the red lights and siren does not exempt officers from the need for caution nor does it exempt them from criminal or civil liability."

Timing under scrutiny

The timing of the collision has also drawn scrutiny because it happened more than 30 minutes after the shooting.

"It's difficult to imagine why he would be running with lights and sirens once the event was cold, once it was secured," said George Kirkham, professor emeritus of criminology at Florida State University and a former part-time police officer. Even when emergency vehicles are running with emergency lights, Kirkham said, they must slow to nearly a stop and be sure the intersection is clear before proceeding. He said the police radio logs could be vital in piecing together what happened.

He said officers are human beings and can become emo-

tionally charged — particularly when colleagues are injured.

"That would be more of a situation where an officer calls for help when there's just been a shooting and everyone pulls out the stops," he said. "That's when you expect the adrenaline to occur. Not a half-hour afterward."

Tuthill said she spoke to some police administration employees at the awards ceremony on Monday morning. "I said the community's going to need some answers," Tuthill said. "Because we've got rumors out there." She said she plans to have an evening community meeting in the next week or two, where residents can ask questions.

Helmet was on passenger

The mood was somber among the 140 employees at Franklin Street Bakery in Minneapolis, where Ivan Romero, as he was known, worked for more than three years. He worked the overnight shift as a production area leader, leading a group that mixed dough.

"He was a typical twenty-something, just enjoying life, a free-spirited sort of fellow but also a very very hard worker," said general manager Sid Larson.

Staff members put up a bulletin board in memory of Romero on Monday, along with an area to accept donations.

Romero loved his motorcycle, a Yamaha sport bike, which he had just begun riding to work a couple of weeks ago. Larson, who rides a Harley-Davidson, would talk bikes with his employee. One of the last times they spoke, he was gently teasing him about his new spiked hairstyle.

Despite reports that Romero wasn't wearing a helmet, Larson said Romero was always careful on the bike, and in fact was helmetless when he was killed because he gave it to Torrejon-Villamil to wear.

"It was because of his generosity that he wasn't wearing a helmet that day," he said.

Staff writer Eric Roper contributed to this report.

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