

BABY, FATHER, COP DIE IN FIGHT \ DETROIT STANDOFF ENDS WITH GUNFIRE

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The father of a six-month-old girl cut the child's throat and killed a police officer before he was killed Monday in a hail of gunfire outside his home on Detroit's far west side, police said.

Mercedes Smith died when her father, **Jesse White** , 22, slit her throat after a brief standoff with police on the front lawn of his home, according to police.

White and Officer Andre Barksdale, also 22 and on the force for about 22 months, were killed during a scuffle after White tried to grab an officer's gun, police said.

Another officer, Sgt. John Mitchell, 42 and a 17-year veteran who had been called to the home to supervise officers, was wounded.

WHEN ASKED about the officers' actions, Deputy Chief Mary Jarrett Jackson, who is in charge of the western half of the city, said:

"They handled it properly."

The police investigation is incomplete, and witnesses' accounts of what happened differ.

According to Tamika Smith, the infant's aunt, White had arrived about 6:30 p.m. at 3315 Elmhurst, the home of his wife, Kimberly Smith, 18, from whom he had been separated for five months.

At first, Smith said, White was kissing the infant. Then he threatened the child's babysitter at gunpoint and ordered the babysitter not to follow him.

White then took the baby and left, Smith said.

WHITE TOOK the baby to a single-story white frame house at 12695 Blackstone on the far west side, where neighbors said he lived with a woman. He arrived there about 7 p.m., neighbors said. They said the woman was not home because she was visiting someone at the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson.

However, Jeanette Kapers, 22, who lives three doors away from the house where White was living, said a man and a woman brought the baby to the house. Kapers said the woman got out of the car and handed the baby to the man.

"They were smiling and talking," Kapers said.

Then the woman left, Kapers said.

Because people at the Elmhurst home had called police, officers from the 6th (Plymouth) Precinct went to the Blackstone house.

Sherry Porter, who lives next door to the house where White was living, said five or six police cars arrived a few minutes after White came home with the infant.

ONE POLICE witness said White called the Elmhurst house and threatened to kill himself and his daughter but gave no reason.

Michael Eberhart had just begun his lunch break around 6:30 p.m. from his shift at Kux Manufacturing Co. when he saw the police pull up across the street on Blackstone.

He said the officers separated and were circling the house on foot, peeking in windows.

"The dude, this young fellow, he come out with the baby," Eberhart said.

White walked out on to the front porch holding a knife in one hand and his daughter in the other, Porter said.

She said she heard one officer yell:

"Why do you want to do the baby like that, man?"

Eberhart said White was moving toward the officers, still holding the baby, when one of the officers fired a "warning shot" into the air.

However, Deputy Chief Jarrett-Jackson said no warning shot was fired, adding, "We do not fire warning shots."

A police spokesman said that it appears White slit his daughter's throat, tried to grab one of the officers' guns and a struggle began and shots were fired.

BUT PORTER said Mercedes was cut after White "came at the officers" and they shot him in the leg and he fell to the ground.

"Then they were struggling on the grass," Eberhart said. "And somebody came up firing. The police ran and ducked."

A police witness said that after White was hit, he rose up and fired, hitting Barksdale from point-blank range. He then spun and fired at Mitchell, the witness said.

As Mitchell was falling, he fired, hitting White several times, said the witness, who spoke on condition of not being named.

Porter said as White fell to the ground, five or six officers jumped on him and one of them grabbed the baby and the others started beating White with flashlights and fists.

DURING the struggle, White grabbed one of the officers' guns and shots rang out, Porter said.

Porter said that after the smoke had cleared, officers took the infant, Barksdale and Mitchell to the hospital and White lay bleeding on the street for about 40 minutes.

"He just laid there and died," Porter said.

Police said White suffered multiple gunshot wounds, Barksdale was hit in the right side of the chest and Mitchell was hit twice in the chest.

The baby and Barksdale were taken to Mt. Carmel Mercy Hospital, where they were pronounced dead on arrival shortly after 7 p.m. Mitchell, taken to the same hospital, was listed in fair condition.

AROUND 9:10 p.m., a gold Pontiac 6000 swerved around police cars outside the house on Blackstone, ignoring orders to halt, jumped a curb and came to a stop almost directly in front of the home, its engine smoking.

As police surrounded the car and ordered the two men inside to get out, members of the Smith family converged on the lawn, screaming at the two.

"He's the one! He's the one who took the baby! Where's the baby?" the relatives yelled.

Police wrestled one of the two men from the car to the ground and took both of them to the back of a scout car.

One of the men smashed his head repeatedly against the patrol car window, screaming: "My brother's dead! He killed his baby. Why did you kill him?"

Smith family members continued shouting at the two as they were driven away in the patrol car.

Porter said White was upset because he and his wife had been having problems and he could not see the baby as often as he liked.

"She was a pretty little girl," a woman on Blackstone said of the child.

THE SLAIN officer, Barksdale, was born in Detroit and went to high school in the city.

"He graduated from high school and then he was going to college in Dearborn," his aunt, Cornelia Barksdale, said. "But he had to drop out.

"He was a nice boy. He was kind."

His mother lives in Detroit, as does his sister Valerie. He also has a brother and a fiancée, with whom he had a two-year-old son. His father is dead.

About 9:45 p.m., a young woman, flanked by two plainclothes officers, sat outside the Homicide Section on the fifth floor of Detroit police headquarters and screamed:

"Not my baby! He killed my baby!"

By midnight, little evidence could be seen inside the house on Blackstone of what had happened.

A box of Froot Loops and an empty Wonder bread bag sat on a table in the kitchen.

Outside the house, a solitary tennis shoe sat in a pool of drying blood.

CUTLINE

Police gather evidence and interview witnesses Monday evening near 12695 Blackstone, the white house in left background, on Detroit's far west side where an infant, the child's father and a Detroit policeman were killed during a struggle.

Detroit Police Officer Andre Barksdale, 22, left, was killed and Sgt. John Mitchell, 42, was wounded during a struggle Monday when a family dispute ended in gunfire.

A woman who identified herself as a relative of the slain infant falls to the ground in grief at the scene of Monday's killings.

Caption: Photo Color and Photo GEORGE WALDMAN; Photo; Map Color DOMINIC TRUPIANO

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