

Four officers killed, seven injured at protest

By TERRY WALLACE
Associated Press

DALLAS — At least two snipers opened fire on police officers in Dallas on Thursday night, killing four officers and injuring seven others during protests over two recent fatal police shootings of black men, police said.

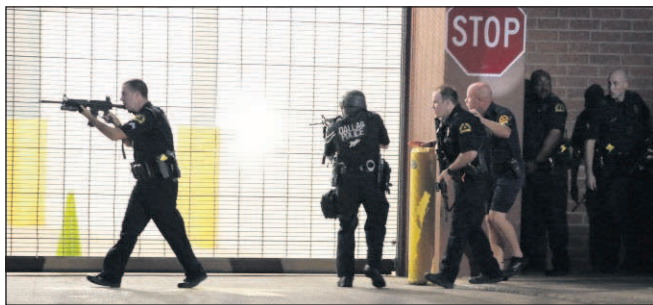
Dallas Police Chief David Brown told reporters the snipers fired “ambush style” upon the officers. Mayor Mike Rawlings said one member of the public was wounded in the gunfire.

Police later said in a statement that a suspect was in custody and a “person of interest” had surrendered. They said a suspicious package was being secured by a bomb squad.

The gunfire broke out around 8:45 p.m. Thursday while hundreds of people were gathered to protest fatal police shootings this week in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and suburban St. Paul, Minnesota.

The protests in Dallas were among several across the country that were held after a Minnesota officer on Wednesday fatally shot Philando Castile while he was in a car with a woman and a child in a St. Paul suburb. The aftermath of the shooting was livestreamed in a widely shared Facebook video. A day earlier, Alton Sterling was shot in Louisiana after being pinned to the pavement by two white officers. That, too, was captured on a cellphone video.

Video footage from the scene showed that protesters were marching along a street in downtown, about half a mile from City Hall, when the shots erupted and the crowd scattered, seeking cover.



Maria R. Olivas/The Dallas Morning News via AP

Dallas police respond after shots were fired during a protest over recent fatal shootings by police in Louisiana and Minnesota, Thursday in Dallas.

Brown said that it appeared the shooters “planned to injure and kill as many officers as they could.”

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott released a statement saying he has directed the Texas Department of Public Safety director to offer “whatever assistance the City of Dallas needs at this time.”

“In times like this we must remember — and emphasize — the importance of uniting as Americans,” Abbott said.

The search for the shooters stretched throughout downtown, an area of hotels, restaurants, businesses and some residential apartments. The scene was chaotic, with helicopters hovering overhead and officers with automatic rifles on the street corners.

“Everyone just started running,” Devante Odom, 21, told The Dallas Morning News. “We lost touch with two of our friends just trying to get out of there.”

Carlos Harris, who lives downtown told the newspaper that the shooters “were strategic. It was tap tap pause. Tap tap pause.”

Demonstrator Brittaney Peete told The Associated Press that she didn’t hear the gunshots, but she “saw people rushing back toward me saying there was an active

shooter.”

Peete said she saw a woman trip and nearly get trampled.

Other protests across the U.S. on Thursday were peaceful. In midtown Manhattan, protesters first gathered in Union Square Park where they chanted “The people united, never be divided!” and “What do we want? Justice. When do we want it? Now!”



Ting Shen/The Dallas Morning News via AP

A Dallas Area Rapid Transit police officer receives comfort at the Baylor University Hospital emergency room entrance Thursday in Dallas.

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Shooting of ‘Mr. Phil’ shocks colleagues at Minnesota school

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
Associated Press

Philando Castile put on a suit and tie to interview for a supervisory position in the school district where he had worked since he was a teenager. He told the interviewer his goal was to one day “sit on the other side of this table.”

His upbeat disposition won him the job.

“He stood out because he was happy, friendly and related to people well,” said Katherine Holmquist-Burks, principal at J.J. Hill Montessori in St. Paul, Minnesota, who hired him to oversee the school cafeteria.

Now, colleagues and family members are trying to understand why a police officer in a St. Paul suburb fatally shot Castile, 32, after stopping his car Wednesday night. The Justice Department announced it would monitor the state investigation of the shooting, which Gov. Mark Dayton said would look at whether Castile’s race played a role. Castile was black.

A passenger in the car, Castile’s girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, said the officer was Asian. She said he opened fire when Castile reached for his identification. She said Castile had a license to carry a firearm.

Castile graduated from Central High School in St. Paul in 2001 and joined the school district’s Nutrition Services Department when he was 19. He worked at two schools before getting his promotion at J.J. Hill in 2014.

Students at the magnet school came to know him as “Mr. Phil,” a gregarious man who sneaked students extra graham crackers and other treats in the lunch line.

“He always gave you a high-five after lunch,” 9-year-old Jas Gilman said.

Holmquist-Burks, who retired last week, said he loved his job and never missed work or drew a complaint. Castile supervised two employees and ran the cafeteria for a school with 530 students and 85 staff.

He helped “create a warm, welcoming friendly environment in our cafeteria,” she



AP Photo/Jim Mone

A man displays his thoughts where hundreds gathered at the JJ Hill Montessori School Thursday in St. Paul, Minn. for a vigil following the shooting death by police of Philando Castile Wednesday night in Falcon Heights, Minn. after a traffic stop for a broken tail light by St. Anthony police.

said.

Holmquist-Burks said that after she heard about Castile’s death, she went to the vigil being held at the governor’s mansion.

“I want his name respected,” she said. “He was not a bad person. He was a great person. He was a warm person and a gentle spirit. This was a tragedy that he was murdered.”

A cellphone video shot by Reynolds immediately after the officer opened fire indicated the officer may have believed Castile was reaching for a weapon.

Castile got a license to carry a firearm “for safety,” said Dewanda Harris, 52, Castile’s cousin. Harris, of Glendale, Arizona, said she watched Castile grow up in St. Paul alongside her son, who was about the same age.

Of the gun, she said, “I discussed it with my son and he began to tell me about them going to the gun range. All of them got licenses to carry,” Harris said of Castile and other family members. “All of them do. They got it to protect themselves.”

Harris said Castile would not have posed a threat.

“I know he was doing the right thing. Phil was a good kid. I’m stunned by this,” she said.

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