



StarNews

FRIDAY, November 8, 2013

50¢



www.StarNewsOnline.com



@StarNewsOnline



Facebook.com/StarNewsMedia

> FBI WARNING ON UNITED BLOOD NATION > RETALIATION FOR SMITH KILLING

Gang may be targeting cops

By ADAM WAGNER

adam.wagner@starnews.com

Members of one Wilmington gang are "committed to engage in shootings," possibly focusing on law enforcement, after the shooting death of Brandon Devone Smith, according to an FBI memo sent to the state's police chiefs.

Smith was shot to death Oct. 13 by two New Hanover County Sheriff's Office deputies and an ATF agent three days after allegedly firing on Michael Spencer, a member of the FBI Safe

Streets Task Force and sheriff's office detective, in Creekwood.

Spencer is recovering after being shot in the left leg. A Wilmington Police Department detective who was with Spencer when he was shot and who returned fire on Smith is still on paid administrative leave pending an internal investigation.

Last week, the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation determined that officers were justified in firing on Smith during the Oct. 13 incident.

Shortly after Smith was killed, New Hanover

County Sheriff Ed McMahon said gang members had shown "a blatant disregard for authority and for life" during a recent wave of gun violence.

Smith was a validated member of the United Blood Nation gang and the threatened violence would be retaliation for his death, according to the FBI memo dated Oct. 22.

"Low ranking UBN foot soldiers committed to engage in shooting in the City of Wilmington

See GANG | 4A

RECORDS SOUGHT | 4A



A lawyer for Brandon Devone Smith's family is seeking documents related to his case, including shooting death by law enforcement.

GANG

Continued from 1A

for the next 52 days in retaliation for Smith's death," the memo said.

The period would be 52 days because of its importance to a branch of local Bloods, the 5 Deuce Brims, the memo said. Friday marks the 26th day since Smith's killing in the woods bordering a Wrightsboro neighborhood.

According to a Wilmington Police Department document, gang members have in the past followed officers and conducted surveillance on them after they left their command posts or the courthouse.

"It is standard practice for the FBI to share information with our law enforcement partners. In this case, the report was sent directly to law enforcement agencies to provide situational awareness," said Shelley Lynch, an FBI spokeswoman, in a statement. Lynch added she could not add more details because the memo was marked law enforcement sensitive.

The sheriff's office refused to comment on the memo.

Wilmington Police Chief Ralph Evangelous was unavailable for comment Thursday.

Officer-involved incidents

Since Oct. 22, the SBI has opened three investigations into law enforcement-involved incidents in the region. During those incidents, police shot and killed two people, wounded two others,

and another man was injured by a police dog.

The two men who were killed and one of the men wounded are alleged to have been involved in the Oct. 25 armed robbery of the Pizza Hut on 17th Street in Wilmington. Six WPD officers were placed on administrative leave pending an SBI investigation into the shootings. Police recovered two guns from the suspects who Evangelous said fired no shots during their attempt to flee.

That incident happened on the first night of a joint effort of the WPD and sheriff's office called maximum uniform deployment, in which 32 typically non-uniform officers from each organization - a total of 64 - are working regular patrol shifts.

On Wednesday, one man was shot in the foot at a Lullwater Drive apartment complex after he and two other men attempted to charge police in a gold Cadillac. The officers were investigating a report of a home invasion by three men armed with guns. Following the incident, two officers who fired on the suspects were placed on paid administrative leave pending an SBI investigation.

Evangelous and New Hanover County District Attorney Ben David also on Wednesday requested an SBI investigation into a K-9 incident in the early hours of Nov. 1. Johnnie Lamont Williams allegedly drove through a traffic stop, almost running down police, and refused to leave his vehicle after police stopped him at Castle Hayne Road and 23rd Street.

A K-9 officer deployed his dog on Williams, according to a news release, and Williams had to be taken to New Hanover Regional Medical Center with wounds from the dog before being taken into custody.

Smith investigation

David said Nov. 1 that an investigation by the SBI concluded law enforcement officers were justified in opening fire on Smith on Oct. 13, even though he was not carrying a weapon.

An agent from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and two sheriff's office deputies pursued Smith into the woods where, according to a narrative prepared by the District Attorney's Office, they saw him on the ground and "repeatedly" demanded he show his hands.

Instead of raising his hands, according to the narrative, Smith reached into his pockets and struggled to pull out a dark object, then began to extend his arm toward the officers.

"Everything that the officers could see was consistent with the object being a gun; there was nothing about the situation that might have suggested it was anything else," the narrative said.

The officers then "simultaneously" opened fire on Smith, who was still seated. David said nine bullets struck Smith, three grazed him and 12 missed during the 3 seconds of gunfire.

Adam Wagner: 343-2096
On Twitter: @adamwagner1990