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Suspect in detective's shooting killed

Wrightsboro | Officers shoot Brandon Smith after car chase

BY ADAM WAGNER

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The man accused of shooting and wounding a New Hanover County Sheriff's Office detective was killed Sunday afternoon by law enforcement officers, according to New Hanover County District Attorney Ben David.

Brandon Devone Smith, 30, was shot following a car chase and a foot pursuit that ended in a wooded Wrightsboro area.

Authorities said Smith shot Michael Spencer, a member of the FBI Safe Streets Task Force, about noon Thursday in the Creekwood public housing development.

Warrants were issued last week for Smith's arrest on two counts of attempted first-degree murder and two counts of assault with a deadly weapon on a government official.

A multi-agency search for Smith came to an end Sunday afternoon when law enforcement officials chased a car with Smith in it onto Carl Seitter Drive in Wrightsboro.

Residents described the area as peaceful, with a few break-ins constituting all of the recent crime.



Smith

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"This is a very quiet neighborhood - bunch of old people," Rose Mize said.

On Sunday afternoon, though, a noisy car chase came down the block. Residents described seeing several vehicles trailing a Crown Victoria with two men in it.

"You couldn't put a piece of paper between the first cop car and the guy they were chasing's bumper," said Mize, who lives on Carl Seitter



Law enforcement officers swarmed to Fulbright Street on Sunday after the pursuit and shooting of Brandon Devone Smith, who was accused of shooting and wounding a New Hanover County sheriff's detective last week. Photo by Adam Wagner

See SMITH | 4A

SMITH

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Drive.

The vehicle Smith was in then turned onto Fulbright Street, authorities said, where he left the vehicle and fled into what David called "a heavily wooded area."

There, multiple gunshots were fired and Smith was killed. No officers were injured during the encounter.

A sheriff's office spokesman could not confirm Sunday whether another person had been with Smith during the pursuit or encounter.

David said he and New Hanover County Sheriff Ed McMahon have called in the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation to look into the incident. The district attorney emphasized that calling in the SBI does not indicate wrongdoing on anyone's part and is standard protocol in an officer-involved shooting.

"We're here to report that in 100 percent of cases involving officer-involved shooting, the sheriff and I both jointly request the outside assistance of the SBI," David said.

He added that multiple officers from different agencies were involved in the pursuit, but did not specify the agencies.

McMahon, dressed in jeans and a flak jacket instead of his typical tan uniform, said he'd been personally involved

in the investigation into Spencer's shooting Thursday and the pursuit of Smith.

"Right now, there's a lot of work that we need to do," McMahon said Sunday evening. "We will release more information, including the officers that were involved."

McMahon added that Spencer is recovering well from his gunshot wound.

On Thursday, Smith was the passenger in a suspicious vehicle that was being observed by law enforcement officers. The vehicle entered Creekwood and the two men in it left the car.

Spencer and a Wilmington Police Department detective who was also assigned to the FBI task force then tried to approach the men, which is when Smith started firing at them, police said.

Spencer was wounded during the gunfire and the other detective returned fire. The detective, whose name hasn't been released, is on paid administrative leave until an internal investigation is completed.

The driver of the vehicle was arrested, interviewed and released without charges, along with the car.

McMahon promised on Thursday that he and his detectives had leads on Smith.

On Sunday, those leads led to Fulbright Street and the nearby woods.

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