



NEWS



News Headlines 03/26/2021

- Sheriff McMahon ID's deputy and suspect; provides more details on shooting in Hesperia
- Raymond Michael Tsuchimoto Dies in Tragic San Bernardino Accident

Sheriff McMahon ID's deputy and suspect; provides more details on shooting in Hesperia

Rene De La Cruz, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: March 26, 2021 at 4:23AM



Dustin Whitson, a 14-year veteran of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, remains in critical condition after he was shot earlier this week, allegedly by Robert Elvis Sparks, a former patient of Patton State Hospital.

Sheriff John McMahon on Thursday identified Whitson as the deputy who was shot in an Aldi grocery store parking lot in Hesperia on Tuesday.

McMahon addressed the shooting, the suspect and Whitson's injuries, among other details, during a pre-recorded press conference posted to YouTube on Thursday afternoon.

"The information that we have, without getting into too much detail, is that Deputy Whitson was shot in the left arm, and the bullet transitioned into his chest area, causing damage. It was behind the vest," McMahon said.

Whitson is "surrounded by his family and friends and is receiving excellent medical care," McMahon said.

Whitson started with the sheriff's department in 2007 as a sheriff's custody assistant and later as a custody specialist at jail facilities. He worked at the Victorville Sheriff's Station as a service specialist and became a deputy in 2015, according to McMahon.

Whitson was later assigned to the Hesperia Sheriff's Station.

The suspect:

Shooting suspect Robert Elvis Sparks in an undated photo.

Authorities previously said deputies from the Apple Valley Sheriff's station shot Sparks after he opened fire on them in a separate incident that occurred after the shooting in Hesperia.

McMahon, who described the 40-year-old San Bernardino resident as having an "extensive criminal history," said Sparks is in critical condition at a local hospital. On Wednesday, officials said he was in stable condition.

In October 2020, Sparks was released from Patton State Hospital near Highland after a four-year stay, according to McMahon.

A California Department of State Hospitals facility, Patton is a forensic psychiatric hospital that opened in 1893 and provides treatment "to forensically and civilly committed patients," the hospital's website shows.

The patient population at Patton generally falls into one of five categories:

Those who are incompetent to stand trial

Those who represent a danger to themselves or others due to mental illness and are treated under a conservatorship

Offenders with mental health disorders

Persons found not guilty of a crime by reason of insanity

Sexually violent predators

According to hospital data, 39% of the 1,550 patients at Patton are incompetent to stand trial, while those who are not guilty by reason of insanity comprise 37% of the patient population.

When he was released from Patton late last year, McMahon said Sparks transitioned to a board and care facility in San Bernardino, but he reportedly went “AWOL” around March 5. Sparks was reported missing, and a felony warrant was issued for his arrest, according to McMahon.

Sparks was later found living at Bear Valley RV and Self Storage, the Daily Press previously reported.

The shooting:

San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon shares an update on Hesperia deputy Dustin Whitson, a 14-year veteran of the department, who was shot Tuesday, March 23, 2021, in the Aldi parking lot in Hesperia. On Tuesday, Sparks was asked to leave the storage facility. He later returned and tried to reenter the secure portion of the property, McMahon said. An employee at the business then called the sheriff’s department.

Sparks reportedly left the area in a maroon Ford SUV, moving to the nearby Mojave Plaza, where the Aldi and an AutoZone are located.

Sheriff’s dispatch received a description of the suspect and vehicle, and Whitson responded to the scene at about 12:38 p.m. Tuesday. There, he found Sparks, sitting alone in the passenger side of the Ford near the AutoZone, according to McMahon.

After a short conversation, “for some reason, Sparks shot Whitson,” McMahon said. The deputy fell to the ground, wounded and unconscious. Sparks allegedly took Whitson’s firearm, got back in the Ford and fled east on Bear Valley Road toward Apple Valley.

Around the same time, a witness took photos of the vehicle and later gave them to investigators. Another witness used Whitson's radio to call dispatch for help.

Deputies arrived and rendered life-saving ahead of the Sheriff’s Air Rescue Helicopter and **San Bernardino County Fire** paramedics, who tended to Whitson while en route to the hospital. He underwent surgery Tuesday.

Sheriff's deputies investigate a shooting at the Mojave Plaza near the Aldi grocery store on Bear Valley Road in Hesperia on March 23, 2021.

Authorities later determined that the original driver of the Ford was inside the AutoZone during the shooting and did not flee the area. The unidentified owner was detained and was later released, according to a sheriff's press release.

Meanwhile, details about the Ford were broadcast over sheriff's radios. An off-duty deputy spotted the suspect's vehicle and followed it east on Bear Valley Road, and as it turned south onto Apple Valley Road.

Deputies from the Apple Valley Sheriff's Station joined the pursuit and followed Sparks' vehicle south as the roadway turned from pavement to dirt.

McMahon said Sparks then stopped his vehicle and fired multiple rounds at the deputies. He kept driving until the Ford became disabled.

After Sparks exited his vehicle, McMahon said he again fired at the deputies and walked toward an occupied residence before shooting a third time.

As Sparks allegedly entered a fenced area of the residence, he headed toward the front door, stopped and fired at a sheriff's helicopter.

Deputies on the ground and one in the air returned fire, according to McMahon.

"Sparks was struck by the gunfire and fell to the ground approximately 30 feet from the front door of that occupied residence," he said.

None of the deputies were injured during the shootout. Deputies detained Sparks and found two firearms — Whitson's and the one allegedly used by Sparks.

Sparks was taken via helicopter to an area hospital where he remained Thursday.

A deputy blocked traffic on Apple Valley Road, south of Verbena Street on Tuesday as sheriff's officials investigated the second shooting scene.

Bear Valley Road was closed Tuesday, March 23, 2021, while San Bernardino County sheriff's personnel investigated the scene where a deputy was shot.

Back in Hesperia, authorities prevented entrance to the shopping center where Whitson was shot. A heavy police presence could be seen as investigators worked into Tuesday evening.

The motive for the shooting remains under investigation.

Anyone with information, or witnesses of the incident, are asked by the sheriff's department to contact Detective Adrian Bustamante, Specialized Investigations Division, Homicide Detail at 909-387-3589.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/crime/2021/03/26/sheriff-mcmahon-ids-deputy-and-suspect-gives-details-hesperia-shooting/6999644002/>

Raymond Michael Tsuchimoto Dies in Tragic San Bernardino Accident

Michael Hussain, The Legal Advocate

Posted: March 26, 2021 at 5:00AM



A 51-year-old San Bernardino man was killed in a multi-vehicle collision at North Arrowhead Avenue and Highland Avenue.

Just after 8:29 a.m., paramedics with the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department arrived at the intersection of North Arrowhead Avenue and Highland Avenue for reports of a crash involving several motorists.

Investigators found Tsuchimoto, a San Bernardino resident, with significant injuries and transported him to St. Bernardine Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead at 8:56 a.m.

The San Bernardino Police Department continues to investigate and hasn't yet determined the cause behind the wreck.

MULTI-VEHICLE CRASH INVESTIGATION

Each year, roughly 36,000 people die – and another 1.9 million people are injured – in motor vehicle crashes in this country. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), occupant fatalities in multiple-vehicle crashes accounted for 40 percent of all fatalities.

“Road conditions, visibility, and lighting are all possible contributing factors that are considered and must thoroughly be examined,” said Candice Bond, a Managing Partner with Bond Legal.

“An accident reconstruction team is sometimes needed to help piece together what happened. All of these resources are necessary for helping clients receive monetary compensation for damages or a loss following a collision,” said Bond.

WRONGFUL DEATH CLAIM

Pending the investigation, the family of Raymond Michael Tsuchimoto may be entitled to a wrongful death claim. Family members of wrongful death victims may seek damages for loss of companionship, pain and suffering, and emotional distress following a tragic or catastrophic accident such as this.

“The stress and sorrow can be extremely overwhelming after losing a loved one in an accident,” added Bond, who is a national legal analyst for The Legal Advocate.

“We understand just what families are forced to go through, and having their rights protected is vital. A wrongful death lawyer will stay updated on the official investigation and help ensure that their legal rights and best interests are protected.”

<https://www.thelegaladvocate.com/news/breaking/raymond-michael-tsuchimoto-killed-arrowhead-avenue-and-highland-avenue-crash>