

DeKalb police shoot carjack suspect 05/16/07

DeKalb County police officers shot a 17-year-old carjacking suspect when he backed a stolen car into three police cars early Tuesday, police said.

The suspect, identified as Justin Knox, survived the shooting and was hospitalized in stable condition. Police spokesman Ariel Toledo said officers patrolling near Lithonia spotted a car about 2 a.m. Tuesday that had been stolen less than an hour earlier at the Wal-Mart on nearby Fairington Road. When the car pulled into a driveway, officers ordered the driver to get out, Toledo said. Instead, the driver put the car in reverse and struck the police cars, Toledo said. "In fear of their safety, several officers discharged their weapons, striking the suspect several times," a police statement said. No officers were injured.

Toledo said four officers were present, but he did not know how many fired. The officers were placed on paid administrative leave, as is customary in such cases. Police said the confrontation capped a nightlong crime spree by three suspects, two of whom were still at large. In the first incident, a man was kidnapped and taken to a cemetery on Giles Road. He was released, but his pickup truck was stolen.

The stolen pickup was seen at the Wal-Mart when a woman was carjacked at gunpoint at 1:15 a.m. Her car and the pickup then were used by three suspects who robbed two men at an ATM on Rockbridge Road at 1:58 a.m. Shots were fired in that robbery, but neither victim was injured. Minutes later, Knox was spotted in the car, police said.

The final confrontation occurred in front of Daniel Cannon's home. Cannon said he and his family were awakened by about five rapid shots. "I didn't know what to think," Cannon said. "We were like, 'What is going on?' It's something that I wouldn't want to wake up to again." The stolen pickup truck was found abandoned in the same neighborhood at noon Tuesday, police said. The suspects from that vehicle still were being sought.

Tuesday's shooting was the second reported this year by DeKalb police in which a suspect was wounded. No suspects have been killed by DeKalb police this year. Last year, DeKalb police shot and killed 12 suspects, prompting protests by activists and relatives of some of the slain suspects. One officer also was killed. A special grand jury is investigating those cases and DeKalb police use of force procedures and training.

Observers from other law enforcement agencies came to both of this year's shooting scenes under a policy implemented by new Police Chief Terrell Bolton. Under the policy, observers from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the federal Drug Enforcement Agency may offer suggestions to police commanders but do not file a written report.