

Investigator fired over money missing from crime scene: 4/18/08

Action comes after DeKalb grand jury probe into 2006 police shootings

DeKalb County Police Chief Terrell Bolton has fired an investigator and suspended the commander of the crime scene unit over the handling of money found near the body of a suspect slain by police.

A special grand jury that investigated shootings by police raised questions last month about whether money was taken from two shooting scenes. Friday, police said an internal investigation of one of those cases led to the firing Thursday of crime scene investigator Greg Waters.

Bolton also suspended Charles Moss, the crime scene unit's commander, for 40 hours, said department spokeswoman Keisha Williams.

The grand jury report said Waters, a civilian police employee, collected cash from the parking lot where Larry Pitts was shot to death Aug. 15, 2006. Police said Pitts had fired a shot into an apartment door and struggled with officers who came to investigate.

An investigator for the district attorney's office testified money that had been in Pitts' possession was scattered around the parking lot.

The investigator testified that even though he and District Attorney Gwen Keyes Fleming spoke to Waters and Moss at the shooting scene about "the urgency of locating the money at the time, neither Mr. Waters nor Mr. Moss indicated they knew where it was," the grand jury report said.

The grand jury report said Waters then failed to turn in the money for about a year. The panel questioned whether Waters submitted the actual money from the crime scene and whether the full amount was turned in.

Williams said Waters was fired for improperly handling \$200 from the scene of the Pitts shooting as well as for neglect of duty and being "less than truthful" with internal affairs investigators.

Moss was suspended for failing to properly supervise his unit, Williams said. He remains in charge of the crime scene unit.

Neither Waters nor Moss were available for comment. The police department would not provide contact information.

In the other case targeted by the grand jury, two witnesses said armed robbery suspect Shakir Harris was carrying a cloth bag, possibly containing about \$700, just before he fired at an officer and was shot to death by police Sept. 2, 2006. No bag was recovered.

Keyes Fleming declined to comment on the cases because her investigation is continuing, said her spokeswoman, Jada Hudspeth.

The special grand jury last month ruled 12 fatal shootings by DeKalb police in 2006 were justified, including the slayings of Pitts and Harris. It recommended criminal investigation of two other fatal shootings, one involving DeKalb police and the other a raid by several federal agencies.

Keyes Fleming has said her office is investigating the DeKalb police case, and federal prosecutors will handle the federal raid. She also is investigating the grand jury's questions about the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office, including one case of possible evidence tampering.