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Dallas sniper shooting: 5 police officers slain, suspect ID'd as Army vet Micah Johnson

Jason Sickles
7/8/2016

The sniper who fatally shot five Dallas cops and wounded seven more in the deadliest day for a police force since 9/11, is an Army veteran who targeted white officers to avenge the recent police-involved shootings of black people.

Micah X. Johnson, a 25-year-old who served six years in the Army Reserve, died early Friday when police deployed a robot to blow up an explosive device in the parking garage where officers had cornered the gunman and engaged in hours of negotiations that ultimately failed.

The deceased have been identified as Dallas police officers Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Patrick Zamarripa, Michael Smith, and Dallas transit officer Brent Thompson.

“The suspect said he was upset at white people. The suspect stated he wanted to kill white people, especially white officers,” Dallas Police Chief David Brown said at a news conference. “The suspect said he was upset about Black Lives Matter. He said he was upset about the recent police shootings.”



A picture Micah Johnson used as his profile photo on social media.

Investigators were seen leaving a home Friday in a Dallas suburb where Johnson apparently lived with his mother.

Johnson allegedly opened fire Thursday night on what had up to that point been a peaceful demonstration over the police shooting deaths of black men this week in Minnesota and Louisiana.

The hail of gunfire sent hundreds of demonstrators screaming in terror, and a police manhunt culminated with the suspect cornered by police in a downtown parking garage. After hours of attempted negotiations failed, Brown said police sent in the robot bomb as a last resort to protect more officers from harm.

Robotics expert Peter W. Singer told the Associated Press he believes this is the first instance of a robot being used to kill a suspect.

Brown said that during the standoff, Johnson told officers he was acting alone, but police said investigators are still trying to determine whether there were other potential assailants. The chief declined to provide specifics. A woman and two men were detained overnight, but police have not revealed if they were connected to the ambush.

“Through our investigation of some of the suspects, it’s revealed to us that this was a well-planned, well thought out, evil tragedy by these suspects,” Brown said at a Friday afternoon vigil. “And we won’t rest until we bring everyone to justice.”

A profile of Johnson began to emerge Friday as media outlets dug into public records and scoured his social media profile pages for possible clues as to what triggered the deadly attack.

Johnson, according to military records, served in the Army Reserve from March 2009 until April 2015. He was a carpentry and masonry specialist, the records show. Johnson was deployed to Afghanistan in November 2013 and July 2014, which earned him a Global War on Terrorism Service Medal among other awards.

A Facebook photo dated April 30 of this year shows Johnson pictured with Professor Griff of the hip-hop group Public Enemy, known for its politically charged music and critique of police treatment of the African-American community. A 1989 single titled “Fight the Power” is the group’s best-known song. Griff took to Twitter Friday to deny any relationship with the alleged shooter.

“I do not advocate killing cops,” Professor Griff tweeted, while denying any connection to the Dallas tragedy. “The police and FBI have been watching me and tapping my phone they know who I talk to, I DO NOT KNOW THE SHOOTER,” he wrote in another tweet.

October 2010 photos on Johnson’s mother’s Facebook page show a young man dressed in U.S. Army fatigues posing with a pistol. Johnson’s most recent address is listed as a home belonging to his mother, located in the suburb of Mesquite about 20 miles outside downtown Dallas.

The collage below appeared on the Facebook page of Johnson’s sister, Nikki Johnson, who posted several times on her page to express disbelief over her brother’s apparent role in the tragedy.

A collage of photos of shooter, Micah X. Johnson from his sister’s Facebook page.

“I keep saying its not true...my eyes hurt from crying. Y him???” Nikki wrote in a post. “And why was he downtown smh (shaking my head).”

“We may fuss or fight but at the end of the day i love him!!,” she wrote in a 2014 post. “He’s definitely army strong but also a entertaining, loving, understanding, not to mention handsome friend, brother, son and etc!! Idk what I’d do without him. Happy Birthday my homeskillet biscuit!!!!

#Still waiting for you to return home!”



Dallas police investigate a car shortly after several police officers were shot during a protest in downtown Dallas.

Fourteen people in all were wounded in Thursday night's ambush. The victims included two civilians.

How Johnson went about the rampage reveals a lot about him, said former FBI profiler Mary O'Toole.

"This hunting behavior is a very unique violence called instrumental violence, and it is the preferred violence of individuals who manifest traits of psychopathy," O'Toole told Yahoo News. "It is extremely difficult to negotiate with a psychopath and Dallas police realized that, and realized this shooter was on a mission and was going to continue to kill no matter what they said to him."

Brown said Thursday night that police believed the attack could have been coordinated by multiple snipers, who, "working together with rifles, triangulated at elevated positions in different points in the downtown area where the march ended up going."

Members of the police department had met with protest organizers several times before the event, the chief said.

"We have yet to determine whether or not there was some complicity with the planning of this, but we will be pursuing that," Brown said.

There was confusion early on in the investigation and in its efforts to quickly identify a suspect, police posted a photo of a gun-toting man who was later found to be the brother of one of the demonstration's organizers. The man, identified as Mark Hughes, turned himself into police when he realized he had been identified as a person of interest and was released after being questioned for about 30 minutes, CBS News reported.

"I could easily have been shot," Hughes told the network. He was interviewed in Dallas with his brother Cory Hughes. Both were downtown to participate in the protest.

Mark Hughes was carrying an AR-15-like gun on a shoulder holster, which is legal under Texas's open carry laws. After shots rang out downtown, Corey Hughes said, "I told my brother, give your gun to [police] because we don't want an accident."

Witnesses posted several videos and images from the attack, in which several rounds of rapid gunfire can be heard as pedestrians run screaming for cover.

Witnesses said they believed that the shooter or shooters ambushed officers from a multi-story parking garage.

"The cops had no idea who was shooting at them," Jamal Johnson told KTVT-TV in Dallas. "Everyone knew it wasn't a firework — it was an actual shot."

The shooting broke out just hours after President Obama — reacting to the shootings deaths of black men in Minnesota and Louisiana this week — posted an emphatic message on Facebook calling upon all Americans to confront persistent racial disparities between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

"To admit we've got a serious problem in no way contradicts our respect and appreciation for the vast majority of police officers who put their lives on the line to protect us every single day," he wrote. "It is to say that, as a nation, we can and must do better to institute the best practices that reduce the appearance or reality of racial bias in law enforcement."

"I THINK A SHOOTOUT IS HAPPENING DOWNSTAIRS OH MY GOD," a Twitter user named Allison posted moments before capturing the sound of rapid gunfire on video.

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings said the White House and Texas governor's office both called to offer support.

"In the end, three things remain: faith, hope and love, OK?" Rawlings said Friday afternoon. "We need all three today. We must have faith in each other, in our institutions. We must have hope and believe that tomorrow will be better — and it will. And we must love one another, because if we don't, this cancerous separatism will kill this body."