

Des Moines Police Officers Gunned Down Execution Style

Two Iowa police officers were shot dead on Wednesday while sitting in their patrol cars in what authorities called separate and unprovoked attacks, and a 46-year-old man suspect was captured hours later, police said.

The man, Scott Michael Greene, was taken into custody after police named him as their suspect in the ambushes in Des Moines and a suburb of the Iowa capital, a police spokeswoman in Urbandale, Iowa said. Police said it was unclear what provoked the attacks.

The shootings represented the latest attacks on police in the United States during a time of intense public debate over race and the criminal justice system in America.

Police said they found the first slain officer's body about 1:06 a.m. (a.m. ET) in Urbandale, an affluent Des Moines suburb, and the second about 20 minutes later about two miles (3 km) away, in Des Moines. Police declined to release the names of the officers awaiting notification of their families.

A police cruiser at the site of the Des Moines shooting could be seen riddled with three bullet holes.

"These officers were ambushed," Des Moines police spokesman Paul Parizek told a news conference prior to Greene's arrest.

It appeared the suspect, who is white, had a recent run-in with police.

A 10-minute video posted on YouTube last month by a user calling himself Scott Greene showed an interaction with officers following an incident at a sports stadium in which

he described holding up a Confederate battle flag during the playing of the U.S. national anthem. He is heard claiming that he was assaulted.

Reuters was unable to immediately confirm whether the video was made by the suspect, whose face does not appear in it. It records a male voice arguing with police over the incident.

The Confederate flag is a racially charged symbol for its association with the pro-slavery South in the U.S. Civil War.

Before the shootings in Iowa, 50 police officers had died by gunfire, two accidentally, in the line of duty in the United States this year, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page website.

A black Afghan war veteran who said he wanted to “kill white people” killed five police officers during a Dallas protest decrying police shootings of black men in July.

A black Iraq war veteran fatally shot three officers and wounded three others in Baton Rouge in an ambush later in July.

Both of those attacks on police followed fatal shootings by officers of black men in Minnesota and Louisiana.

Philadelphia police officers have been deliberately targeted by a gunman twice this year.

The Iowa killings came two years after two New York police officers were shot dead while sitting in their patrol car in Brooklyn by a man who said he wanted to avenge the deaths of unarmed black men killed by police.

Wednesday's shootings came seven months after two Des Moines officers were killed when their vehicle was hit by a drunken driver. Another Des Moines police officer died in a motorcycle accident in August.

Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign canceled an event in Iowa on Wednesday with former President Bill Clinton and vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine after the shootings.

Republican candidate Donald Trump said on Twitter that he was praying for the slain Iowa officers' families, adding, "An attack on those who keep us safe is an attack on us all."

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