



News Release No. 46
For Immediate Release: December 9, 2011

GUNMAN IDENTIFIED IN VIRGINIA TECH MURDER-SUICIDE ***Radford City Police Link Auto Theft to Gunman***

BLACKSBURG, Va. – Virginia State Police have identified a Spotsylvania County man as the subject responsible for the murder-suicide that occurred Thursday (Dec. 8, 2011) on the Virginia Tech campus. Investigators have confirmed that Ross Truett Ashley, 22, of Partlow, Va., took his own life approximately a half-hour after fatally shooting a Virginia Tech Police Officer. Ashley also had a local residence in the 1000 block of East Main Street in Radford, Va.

At this time, there remains no prior connection or contact between Ashley, who was enrolled part-time at Radford University, and the Virginia Tech Officer he killed. State police investigators are continuing their work to establish a motive in the killing and to recreate Ashley's movements in the days and hours leading up to the murder-suicide.

Ashley has been identified by Radford City Police as the individual responsible for the theft of a white 2011 Mercedes SUV from a real estate office in the City of Radford on Dec. 7, 2011. The Mercedes was stolen at gunpoint at approximately 11:25 a.m. Wednesday from Gilbert Real Estate in the 600 block of Calhoun Street. A male entered the business armed with a handgun and demanded the keys to an employee's vehicle. No one in the real estate office was injured. The subject got away in the SUV, which was located the next day (Dec. 8) on the Smart Road at Virginia Tech. At the time of the armed robbery, Radford City Police had issued a multi-state "Be On the Lookout" (BOL) for the stolen vehicle. When Blacksburg Police responded to a call of an abandoned vehicle on the Smart Road on Dec. 8, they immediately notified Radford City Police of its recovery.

Background on Murder-Suicide

At approximately 12:15 p.m., Virginia Tech Police Officer Deriek W. Crouse had a car stopped in the Coliseum parking lot along Washington Street near the intersection of Spring Road. Officer Crouse was seated inside his unmarked patrol car when Ashley approached the officer and fatally shot him. Ashley then fled on foot from the scene. At the Greenhouses, Ashley changed out of his wool cap and pullover top, and put them inside a backpack that he left outside the buildings. The backpack was recovered later Thursday by Blacksburg Police.

As law enforcement searched the campus for the shooting suspect, a Montgomery County Deputy Sheriff spotted a male pedestrian walking by himself in the "Cage" parking lot along Duck Pond Drive. As the deputy drove towards the man, he temporarily lost sight of him. When the deputy finally reached the subject, the man was on the ground and deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The man had no identification on him and was dressed differently from the clothing description provided by witnesses at the scene of the officer's shooting.

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The bodies of both Officer Crouse and Ashley were transported to the Office of the Medical Examiner in Roanoke for examination, autopsy and identification.

Virginia State Police have been able to review Officer Crouse's in-car video. The video captured a male subject with a handgun at the officer's car at the time of the shooting. The clothing found inside the backpack found at the Greenhouses is similar to the clothing worn by the male subject in the officer's video.

The investigation remains ongoing at this time. Virginia State Police has been assisted during the course of the investigation by the Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Radford City police departments, Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, FBI and Secret Service.

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