

Jefferson City man dies after chase through region, innocent victim killed during attempted carjacking

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GREENVILLE - Illinois State Police say two have died and one injured following what is described as a "kidnapping, carjacking and bi-state police chase."

The calls to police began at 7:40 p.m. in the 500 block of East Elm, Jefferson City, Mo., that a blue SUV was witnessed speeding from the area, where officers founded shell casings and broken glass. The suspect was identified as Leslie K. Austin, a Jefferson City resident, and he was described driving a blue SUV just after 9 p.m. on Highway 50 near Highway 47.

The chase began on Interstate 44 and the vehicle accelerated down I-44 into St. Louis and across the Poplar Street Bridge into Illinois. Along the way, the suspect veered off I-55 to Maryville, Glen Carbon, and Edwardsville, then back through those cities to I-55 again.

A 67-year-old man - Gregory Price - a Florissant, Mo., resident, was shot and killed by Austin when he attempted a carjacking on Route 140.

At approximately 10:32 p.m., deputies from the Bond County Sheriff's Department deployed stop sticks on Illinois Route 140 near Mettler Road.

Because the vehicle had slowed considerably after striking the stop sticks, the alleged kidnapping victims, 33-year-old Danielle L. Smith and the 10-year-old female juvenile, were given an opportunity to escape the vehicle on Illinois Route 140 shortly thereafter. Austin was only able to drive the vehicle at 5 to 10 mph after he hit the stop sticks.

Smith was found to have sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was transported via ambulance to a medical care facility. At this point, officers were still unsure if there were additional victims from the Missouri incident in the vehicle. Moments later, Austin attempted to car jack a second vehicle with no success.

Austin continued to flee from this scene onto Terrapin Ridge Road, then west onto Old Nebo Road. Austin then exited the Mitsubishi and continued to fire shots. An Illinois State Police Trooper returned fire. Austin was ultimately found to be deceased. At this time, it is unknown if the suspect died from the Trooper's return fire or a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Law enforcement protected four homes in that vicinity before and once his vehicle stopped. Shortly after Austin stopped, the coroner was called to the scene.

Police said during the press conference that the 39-year-old suspect was believed to had a relationship with the female, who was kidnapped. Officials also said at the press conference, the juvenile was believed to be a child of the kidnapping victim and Austin.

The Jefferson City, Mo., shooting, and kidnapping victim – Danielle L. Smith – is reported in critical condition at a St. Louis regional hospital. The Jefferson City, Mo., kidnapping victim - a 10-year-old female was uninjured, state police said.

The investigation is ongoing and autopsies will be conducted. No further information will be released at this time.

