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Officer in Scuffle Killed by Police in White Plains

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An off-duty Mount Vernon, N.Y., police officer was shot and killed in downtown White Plains on Friday evening after he pulled his gun on another man and was fired at by Westchester County police officers, the authorities said.



My 9 News/WWOR-TV; Christopher Ridley, 23, was killed Friday.



The scene of the shooting. The victim struggled with another man, and witnesses said that when Westchester County officers intervened, he was shot.

The slain officer, Christopher Ridley, 23, who witnesses said was not in uniform, was killed after a scuffle with two men outside the district offices of the Westchester County Department of Social Services at 85 Court Street, which sits next to a busy shopping mall in the heart of White Plains. The shooting came at a time when serious crimes in the city had reached their lowest levels in more than four decades.

Daniel Jackson, a spokesman for the White Plains police, said Officer Ridley joined the department in January 2006.

On Friday, witnesses described a chaotic scene and gave conflicting accounts of how the shooting occurred.

Victor Garcia, 26, a waiter who works at a restaurant nearby, said he saw two men fighting about 5 p.m. and then saw a car pull up. He said a man, later identified by the authorities as Officer Ridley, got out of the car and pulled his gun in an attempt to break up the fight.

Mr. Garcia said he then heard shots and saw two county police officers arrive at the scene.

“I saw police come from the courthouse,” he said. “They said, ‘Drop your weapon.’ ”

He said that instead of dropping the weapon, the person with the gun turned around, prompting the county officers to shoot.

Officer Ridley was hit twice in the chest. He was taken to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

It was unclear whether the county officers realized that the man being fired at was a police officer.

The two county officers were taken to a hospital, where they were receiving counseling.

Another witness who was parking his car nearby and said he saw the scuffle said that the officers ordered the man to drop his weapon. That witness, who gave his name only as Brian, said he saw the person who later was killed fire several shots at a person he was struggling with.

“The cop told him to drop it, and I told him, ‘Drop the gun, they’re going to shoot you,’ ” he said.

The shooting occurred a few blocks from a newly revitalized Main Street retail strip and just a few doors down from Mulino’s, a popular Italian restaurant. The social services building on Court Street, where the two men were scuffling, was also once the site of a county drop-in center where

homeless men were allowed to spend nights. The county bowed to pressure from city officials and business owners and announced in August that the drop-in center would be closed.

White Plains has been in the midst of an economic renaissance, and just last week city officials said that serious crimes had reached a low. There had not been a murder recorded in the city since May 2006.

Late Friday night there was still a major police presence at the scene of the shooting, with detectives and police officials milling behind yellow police tape as they investigated the shooting. Traffic from Mamaroneck Avenue, a major artery a block from Court Street, was blocked off.

Nate Schweber reported from White Plains. Mathew R. Warren contributed reporting.