

State leaders remember fallen officer

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 22 March 2024 00:00



Services set for March 27

A New Mexico State Police Officer who was shot and killed on Interstate 40 will be laid to rest

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on March 27.

NMSP Officer Justin Hare's funeral services will be held at 11 am at the Legacy Church at 7201 Central Ave. NW in Albuquerque.

The service will be open to the public, and all law enforcement agencies are encouraged to send representatives. Anyone wanting to donate flowers can do so by sending them to Daniel's Family Funeral Services, 4310 Sara Rd. Rio Rancho, N.M. 87124. There will not be a procession after the funeral.

KOB 4 spoke to a woman who says she knows Hare's family.

"I knew the family, I knew him, you know, he was a nice person, and he didn't deserve this. He didn't deserve it at all, and I feel very sad for them," Clara Olguín, a Tucumcari resident, said.

In a statement published March 15, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham grieved the fallen officer.

"I'm heartbroken by the devastating news that State Police Officer Justin Hare was killed in the line of duty while responding to a call near Tucumcari this morning. It's a tragic reminder of the dangers our law enforcement officers face each time they put on a uniform and report for duty," Lujan Grisham said. "Officer Hare was doing his job protecting his community, and his sacrifice will never be forgotten. I offer my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and fellow officers at this most difficult time."

INCIDENT TIMELINE

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Hare met his untimely death after he responded to call around 5 am on March 15 concerning a man driving a white BMW who had a flat tire and was attempting to wave down other motorists on Interstate 40 by mile marker 318 near Tucumcari, New Mexico. The man was later identified as Jaremy Alexander Smith, 32, from Marion, South Carolina.

When Hare arrived at the scene, he parked behind the disabled vehicle. Smith reportedly exited his vehicle and approached Hare's passenger side window. A short conversation ensued about repairing his tire when, without warning, Smith pulled out a firearm and shot Hare.

Smith then walked to the driver's side and allegedly shot the officer again. Smith then pushed Hare into the passenger seat and drove away in the patrol car.

After calls from dispatch to Hare went unanswered, an additional NMSP officer was dispatched to the scene. While the assisting officer responded to the area, Hare's duress signal began to go off. The duress signal is an emergency function of the officer's handheld radio that the officer can activate, and it sends an emergency signal to dispatch.

As the assisting officer continued to the scene, Hare's patrol car sped past him heading westbound at a high rate of speed along the frontage road of I-40 near milepost 312. The officer took the next exit to get on the frontage road and attempted to catch up to the stolen patrol car. When the officer caught up with the patrol car, it had been crashed on the frontage road near milepost 304.

The assisting officer approached the car and found it empty. Smith had apparently fled on foot.

Hare was later located around milepost 312. He was transported via ambulance to an area hospital, where he later died due to his injuries. He was pronounced deceased at 7:21 am.

SUSPECT HUNT

A man hunt began for Smith, who also had an extensive criminal history in South Carolina:

▢ Taking Hostages and Rioting in Jail

▢ Burglary

▢ Breaking and Entering

▢ Armed Robbery

▢ Resisting, Evading Police Officers

▢ Auto Theft

▢ Shooting at or from a Motor Vehicle

▢ Armed Robbery

▢ Person of Interest in Murder of South Carolina Paramedic Phenesia Machado-Fore

NMSP published Smith's mugshot and asked the public for help in finding him.

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A 48-hour manhunt for Smith concluded on March 17 at 7 am when a store clerk from the Murphy's gas station located at 2730 Sunshine W. Plaza Dr. in Albuquerque called Metro Dispatch and said that a man who fit Smith's description - he was last seen wearing a brown hoodie and jacket - had walked into his store.

While Bernalillo County Sheriff's deputies were driving to the scene they received an update that Smith was walking around Unser Boulevard, a street near the gas station. BCSO established a perimeter around the area and began chasing Smith on foot. Shots were reportedly fired.

During a press conference held later that day Bernalillo County Sheriff John Allen said his department didn't know how many shots were fired, but Smith was hit. He was transported to a local hospital, where he received treatment for his injuries while he was under supervision.

BCSO posted a statement about Smith's arrest on their Facebook page:

"The successful capture of Jaremy Smith is a testament to the collaborative efforts of multiple law enforcement agencies and the vigilant citizens of Bernalillo County. We are grateful that his rampage has come to an end, and it serves as a solemn reminder of the dangers faced by law enforcement everyday."

Both Lujan Grisham and Bernalillo County District Attorney Sam Bregman made statements about Smith's arrest on March 17.

"Today's capture and arrest of a suspect in the cold-blooded murder of State Police Officer Justin Hare is a major step toward justice for Officer's Hare's family. While it doesn't bring Officer Hare back, it allows all New Mexicans to breathe a sigh of relief that a dangerous fugitive is off our streets," Lujan Grisham said. "I again extend my deepest sympathies to Officer Hare's family, friends and colleagues in law enforcement for their tragic loss. I hope the suspect's capture brings some measure of comfort to them during this painful time."

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She also thanked the citizen who spotted Smith and called the police.

“I thank the citizen who spotted the suspect and reported him to the authorities. I offer my sincere appreciation to the New Mexico State Police, Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office, first responders, medical personnel and others who responded to this heinous act of unprovoked violence against Officer Hare,” she said. “Violent gun crime is a scourge in New Mexico. We must take decisive action to keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous, repeat felony offenders.”

Bregman also took time to thank law enforcement.

“On behalf of the citizens of the State of New Mexico, I want to thank all the men and women of law enforcement for what they do every day. Being a police officer is the hardest job there is, yet each day police officers work tirelessly to protect us and serve our communities,” he said. “We are grateful this suspect is in custody and our thoughts and prayers turn to the family and friends of State Police Officer Justin Hare. His sacrifice will never be forgotten.” Smith is facing charges of first-degree murder, armed robbery, shooting from a motor vehicle, tampering with evidence, felon in possession of a firearm, unlawful taking of a motor vehicle, and criminal damage to property.

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