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Carjacking Suspect Surrenders Following Chase, Standoff

Traffic, Schools Affected

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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, Fla. -- A man who took a postal worker hostage and led police on a lengthy chase surrendered peacefully.

Nevia Abraham, 38, put his hands up, and walked backwards into the custody of police just after 4 p.m. Friday afternoon. Abraham had released the woman a half hour earlier.

Police chased the armed suspect in a postal truck through the streets of Miami-Dade and Broward counties for nearly two hours today.

When the truck was stopped, it was surrounded by SWAT teams and police.

The Story At A Glance:

- Man carjacks postal truck
- Long, slow chase ends in standoff
- Postal worker held hostage
- SWAT, police surround postal truck
- Several schools lockeddown
- Postal worker released
- Police negotiate with carjacking suspect
- Man surrenders peacefully

The Day's Events

Tanya Mitchell, the postal worker, was forced to drive her truck through the streets for hours and then held hostage after the truck stopped.

The truck stopped at 183rd Street and 27th Avenue in Miami-Dade County, and SWAT teams closed in.

The police said that they used "tactical methods" to flatten the truck's tire. Mitchell was also seen moving



into the back of the truck with Abraham after the tire blew out.

Channel 10's Rad Berky said that Abraham built some sort of barrier of mail on the truck's dashboard, probably in an attempt to block officers' view into the truck. Berky also reported that police pushed the media and workers at local businesses away from the scene.



SWAT team members and officers brought a similar postal truck to the scene and were seen using the truck, presumably to plan their strategy if they need to take over the truck to end the standoff.

They also sent a robot to the postal truck. The robot was used to deliver a cell phone to Abraham after one he was reportedly using went dead. It was unclear if Abraham actually took the phone from the robot. The robot also transmits a signal back to police to help them get a closer look inside the truck.

Traffic in the area was diverted. Originally 48 area schools were locked down, but that list was pared down to nine. (Go to the bottom of this article for a list of schools affected.)

Mitchell's father was nearby the scene, and was very emotional as he told police, "If he [the carjacker] hurts my daughter -- you take him out."

How It Started

Berky said police officers told him that it all started when an anonymous caller reported that two men were trying to rob a mail truck in Carol City in northwest Miami-Dade County.

Police responded and caught one man outside the truck, but Abraham took off with the truck and Mitchell.

As of late Friday afternoon, police had not identified the other man that they have in custody.

The Pursuit

Police said one shot was fired from the postal vehicle during the chase, which made its way for more than an hour in a roughly circular pattern around a large area, including Miami Gardens Drive, 183rd Street, Red Road, the Palmetto Expressway and streets near Pro Player Stadium. Around 12:45 p.m., the driver broke



that pattern and headed into Broward County on University Drive, neared Miramar Parkway, then turned around and drove back to Miami-Dade County.

More than an hour into the chase, police became more aggressive, attempting to block the vehicle's escape at several intersections and moving closer with cars from the rear (pictured, right). The driver took evasive measures, crossing the median, making U-turns and turning in complete circles.

At one point the truck stopped and Mitchell asked another motorist, the Rev. Mark Cooper, for his phone.

"I rolled down my window to ask if she was all right, and she said, 'Please, can I have your phone? Please, can I have your phone?'" said Cooper, who quickly gave his cell phone to the woman.

Cooper said he didn't see a weapon in the suspect's hand and that he seemed very calm.

Channel 10 News reporter Connie Hicks was in the area and saw the truck drive by several times. She said Abraham looked "very intense, very serious." Hicks said Mitchell looked terrified and had her hands clenched on the steering wheel.

Hicks added that it was very dark inside the vehicle and she could not see a weapon.

Nearly 20 police cruisers were part of the chase, including a vehicle carrying the SWAT team. Munn said that Abraham may have been looking for a familiar place to bail out of the car.

The chase affected traffic in large parts of the area in northwest Miami-Dade County as police closed down intersections to clear way for the chase. Police advised drivers to steer clear of the area and are still directing them to stay away from the scene at 183rd Street and 27th Avenue.

Small crowds of people were seen gathered at certain street corners to watch the pursuit as it went by.

The Standoff

The standoff was a tense time for police who worked feverishly to find a peaceful solution and gain the release of the hostage and then the peaceful surrender of the suspect.



Former Miami-Dade County police spokesman and current Channel 10 News police consultant Ed Munn said that the police were being very careful to make

sure that the chase and standoff didn't result in some sort of injury to a passer-by or one of the officers.

The postal truck, which was identified by its number of 3312063, stopped numerous times, even to talk to pedestrians on nearly 10 different occasions. Each time the truck stopped, it started again, continuing to lead officers on a slow-speed chase until the tire blew out.

Schools Locked Down

Several northwest Miami-Dade County schools were locked down due to the standoff. Parents were allowed to pick up their children and buses transported children starting late in the afternoon after the lockdown was lifted. Parents who wanted to pick up their children had to sign a form before they were allowed to leave with their children.

The affected schools:

- Carol City Elementary
- Carol City Middle
- Carol City Senior
- Brentwood Elementary
- Hawkins Elementary
- North County Elementary
- Crestview Elementary
- Parkway Elementary
- Parkway Middle School

Munn said that children at those schools were not in any danger. Officials said that the traffic shut down in the area affected buses and parental pick ups, and that's why the schools were locked down. They stressed that students were **not** in any danger.

Carjacking Suspect's Background

Nevia Abraham has an extensive criminal record, according to a background check. His prior arrests include:

Dec. 28, 1991: Resisting Arrest Without Violence

Dec. 1992: Battery, And Battery On A Law Enforcement Officer (Hollywood)

Dec. 1, 1993: Resisting Arrest Without Violence

July, 1995: Resisting Arrest Without Violence

August 1997: Battery And Domestic Violence

May, 1998: Obtaining Of Drivers License And A Vehicle Registration By Fraud

Police Commend Tanya Mitchell

Police said that they commended Mitchell's calmness during the ordeal. They said she did "everything right."

As Sky10 flew overhead, Mitchell could be seen driving calmly with her seat belt on. At no time did she appear agitated or over-reactive, and police said that they believe her calmness was an asset to bringing the carjacking and standoff to a peaceful conclusion.

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