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By Heather Keels



Smithsburg Police Officer Christopher Shane Nicholson

Night of violence ends in shootout Police charge Douglas Wayne Pryor in deaths of ex-girlfriend, police officer

WASHINGTON COUNTY — The violence that left a woman and a police officer dead Wednesday night started at an apartment complex in Halfway, moved to a field near Smithsburg and ended in a shootout outside the historic Ringgold Meeting House, police said.

Douglas Wayne Pryor, 29, of 23432 Welty Church Road in Smithsburg, was charged Thursday in the stabbing death of his former girlfriend, Alison Munson, 31, of Halfway, and in the fatal shooting of Smithsburg

Police Officer Christopher Shane Nicholson, 25, the Washington County Sheriff's Department said. The charges against Pryor include first- and second-degree murder, the department said.

Pryor was taken into custody after he was shot in an exchange of gunfire with Washington County Special Response Team members, Sheriff Douglas Mullendore said. Pryor was listed in serious condition Thursday night at Washington County Hospital, a nursing supervisor said.



The Washington County Special Response Team armored vehicle was on the scene when a man accused of shooting a Smithsburg police officer was taken into custody early Thursday. Gunshot markings were visible on the front passenger door and window. No SRT members were hurt in the incident that began Wednesday night.

(Photo credit: Joe Crocetta / Staff Photographer)

Suspect's former girlfriend found dead

Police got a call at about 9:30 p.m. Wednesday night that Pryor had harmed Munson at her Halfway residence and was possibly headed to the Smithsburg area, where he lived, Mullendore said.

When deputies arrived at the Halfway apartment, they found Munson dead of what was later determined to be a stabbing, Mullendore said.

Deputies en route to the area of Pryor's house on Welty Church Road asked the Smithsburg Police Department for assistance.

Nicholson, the only Smithsburg Police officer on duty, was waiting for backup on a driveway off of Welty Church Road when he was confronted by Pryor and shot, Mullendore said.

Smithsburg police officer found in field

Our officers were only a minute or so away, but it doesn't take long in those situations for something like that to happen," Mullendore said. When deputies arrived, they found Nicholson lying near his police cruiser in the middle of a field off of Welty Church Road, Mullendore said.

Nicholson was flown to Washington County Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies began a land and aerial search, Mullendore said. For more than an hour, police cars swarmed the area, officers searched vehicles and helicopter spotlights combed the rural landscape.

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Police officers, EMTs, and Special Response Team members prepare to transport a man suspected of shooting a Smithsburg police officer to a waiting Maryland State Trooper helicopter late Wednesday night at the Brethren in Christ Ringgold Meeting House. (Photo credit: Joe Crocetta / Staff Photographer)



This black Chevy 4X4 pickup truck, driven by the man accused of shooting a Smithsburg police officer, led police on a chase Wednesday night. (Photo credit: Joe Crocetta / Staff Photographer)



A Smithsburg police cruiser rests in a field near where Smithsburg Police Officer Christopher Shane Nicholson was found lying Wednesday night. (Photo credit: Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)

Police say suspect began firing at police

At about 11:20 p.m., officers found Pryor in a full-size pickup truck in the area of Midvale Street and Misty Meadow Road in Ringgold, about a mile and a half from the shooting site, Mullendore said.

Pryor immediately began shooting at police and was in and out of his truck as he exchanged fire with Special Response Team members who pursued him in an armored vehicle, Mullendore said.

Police used the armored vehicle to stop the truck, and Pryor was on foot when he was shot in the exchange of gunfire with the SRT and taken into custody, Mullendore said.

The site of the historic Ringgold Meeting House, built in 1871 as one of the first Brethren in Christ meeting houses, was left ravaged by the standoff. Tire tracks streaked the adjoining cemetery Wednesday night and tombstones were toppled near the spot where the wrecked pickup truck came to a stop.

Douglas Wayne Pryor facing murder, assault charges

Pryor's injuries were not life-threatening, and he was taken to Washington County Hospital, where he was put under sedation and police guard, Mullendore said.

Deputies served an arrest warrant at the Hospital at 9:40 a.m. Thursday, charging Pryor with one count of first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree murder, two counts of reckless endangerment, two counts of first-degree assault, two counts of second-degree assault, and one count of violating a protective order, the Sheriff's Department said.

Investigation was continuing at all three crime scenes, Mullendore said.

"Two of the crime scenes are very, very large in area, so it takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to process those," Mullendore said.