



St. Petersburg Police Department News Release



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For Immediate Release

Jan. 11, 2012

Updated Information - Police Pursuit and Fatal Traffic Crash

On Tuesday January 10, 2012 at 5:22 p.m., St. Petersburg Police Officers initiated an authorized pursuit of a 1996 Kia driven by Frank William Roberto, DOB: 10-06-71, 3330 56th Avenue North, St. Petersburg.

Kenneth Gordon Davis Jr., DOB: 09-09-1982, 6418 Rosewood Drive, Tampa, Florida was the right front passenger in the Kia. Gordon's Florida Driver's License lists the Tampa address, but he was living at 4525 1/2 20th Street North at the time.

Davis was wanted for one count of unarmed robbery as a result of an unarmed purse snatch that was reported to the St. Petersburg Police Department on January 6, 2012.

The media alert last night erroneously referred to the charge as an armed robbery.

The victim in the robbery case, Helen Mae Tierney, 37, 250 58th Street North, #804, had driven to 4525 1/2 20th Street North to help Laura Ferguson, 29, a cousin and room-mate of Davis, pack up her belongings and move out of the apartment. Ferguson was moving due to ongoing problems with Davis.

Davis appeared at some point, shoved a witness into Tierney, stole Tierney's purse off her arm, and then fled from the scene.

The victim, Tierney, did not know Davis. Ferguson and others present at the time identified him as the suspect. The victim's purse contained her wallet, cash, a cell phone and jewelry.

Davis fled with the victim's purse and was last seen pedaling away on white, mountain-style bicycle.

The victim and witnesses got into a vehicle to chase after Davis, but one of the tires had been flattened on the vehicle. Presumably, the tire was flattened by Davis prior to the robbery.

According to Ferguson, Davis was a drug addict who has allegedly stolen from friends and family and has allegedly been involved in numerous burglaries to support his drug habit.

Our burglary detectives confirmed that Davis was a named suspect in one recent burglary case, and he also was involved in several suspicious pawn transactions lately.

On Tuesday January 10, 2012, the Department's C.A.S.E. Unit (Crime Analysis, Surveillance and Enforcement) recently began looking for Kenneth Gordon Davis on the unarmed robbery charge.

C.A.S.E. detectives conducted interviews in an attempt to locate Davis. Family members said that Davis had told them he would never "go back to prison and will shoot it out with the police if he is cornered." They also told investigators they have



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seen Davis in possession of handguns in the past.

According to the Florida Department of Corrections website, Davis was released from a Work Release Center on October 23, 2011 after serving a sentence (03-23-2010 to 10-23-2011) for several crimes committed in Hillsborough County in 2009 (grand theft, two counts of dealing in stolen property and two counts of providing false information to a pawnbroker).

C.A.S.E. detectives received information that Davis was a passenger in the Kia in the area of an apartment complex in the 5900 block of 30th Avenue South. They moved into the area and later observed the Kia drive away from the apartment complex.

C.A.S.E. detectives attempted to stop the Kia in the area of 22nd Avenue South and 46th Street South at which time the vehicle sped away from them, driving erratically.

C.A.S.E. detectives did not pursue the Kia. They alerted patrol units in the area of the Kia's description and direction of travel. A police supervisor authorized officers to pursue the Kia.

K-9 officer Dennis Porter, who was operating a marked K-9 cruiser, located the Kia driving northbound on 49th Street South from about 15th Avenue South.

At about 5:22 p.m., K-9 Officer Porter activated his emergency equipment and conducted a police pursuit of the Kia as it drove northbound on 49th Street South.

The Kia crashed about one minute later near the intersection of 5th Avenue North and 49th Street North.

Based on the information available at this time, it appears this police pursuit was justified under the Department's current policy, which permits officers to pursuit a vehicle if they have "reasonable cause to believe the person(s) in the vehicle has committed...a forcible felony...."

By definition, a robbery is a forcible felony.

Nonetheless, it is standard procedure for a Chain of Command to review the circumstances of every pursuit to ensure that all officers adhered to Department policy. It will be several days before the Chain of Command review of this pursuit is complete.

Please see the media alert from Traffic Homicide Investigator Scott Blanchette for the details of the fatal crash investigation.

Information by Bill Proffitt on January 11, 2012 at 2:00 p.m.
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