



Ready to Protect
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NEWS RELEASE

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AGGRAVATED ASSAULT ON A POLICE OFFICER SOUTH LIBERTY AND WEST AVIATION

The Tucson Police Department began receiving several 911 calls at approximately 10:53 p.m. on August 12, 2012 from citizens advising that a group of males were heavily armed and present at a car wash in the vicinity of South Liberty and West Irvington Road. Additional information was provided that the males were both brandishing weapons as well as pointing them at various citizens in the area. Officers from Operations Division South responded to the car wash, arriving within moments of the original 911 calls. Some of the responding officers remained at the car wash to check the welfare of the citizens present. Other officers began following the suspects as they left the area in a **Dark Blue 2007 Jeep Cherokee**.

The suspects began driving in a northbound direction into an adjoining neighborhood. Within minutes, the suspect vehicle came to a stop near the intersection of South Liberty and East Aviation. Three adult male occupants of the vehicle got out of it and began running on foot. Officers initiated a foot pursuit of the suspects. Additional patrol personnel also continued their response to the area in order to assist with the pursuit of the three suspects. As one officer in a marked patrol vehicle approached the intersection of South Liberty and West Pennsylvania, he observed one of the suspects jumping a wall into a residential yard. He slowed his vehicle to a stop and began preparing to exit. Just as the officer was in the process of getting out of the patrol car, the suspect began shooting at him from the other side of the wall. The officer was thankfully not struck, but did suffer minor injuries as a result of flying debris from multiple bullets that struck the patrol vehicle.

An alert was sent citywide requesting all available patrol personnel to respond to the area to assist with locating and apprehending the suspects. The neighborhood was entirely cordoned off between South 6th Avenue to the East, West Ajo Way to the North, South 12th Avenue to the West, and West Michigan Street to the South. Officers were posted at each intersection within the neighborhood as well as along the main arterial streets. A full SWAT call-out was initiated in addition to requested assistance from the Air Support Unit as well as the K-9 Unit. Air and ground personnel searched the area extensively, thoroughly checking the neighborhood yard-by-yard.

Ultimately, one of the suspects was located approximately 1 block away from where the suspect vehicle came to a stop. Approximately 2 to 3 hours later, a second suspect was apprehended with the assistance of a K-9 Unit near the

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intersection of West Pennsylvania and South 6th Avenue. The K-9 bit the suspect during the apprehension, and he did receive a non-life threatening injury. He was transported to a local hospital for treatment. The third suspect remained at large. He has been described as a **Hispanic male, 35-years of age, 5'07" tall, and weighing 220 pounds.**

Police personnel concluded their extensive search of the area shortly after 6:00 a.m. on August 13, 2012. Investigative and patrol personnel remained in the area for several hours to ensure the safety of citizens as they began their day as well as to continue the investigation of the incident. Detectives from the Aggravated Assault Unit located several items of evidence, including **2 AK-47 assault rifles, 1 AR-15 assault rifle, 1 .40 caliber Glock handgun, approximately 400 rounds of ammunition, and a bullet proof vest**, during the service of a search warrant on the suspect vehicle. Additionally, at least one of the suspects that were captured was armed with **a handgun**. It is believed that at least one of the three suspects was **wearing tactical body armor** during the incident. The activities of the suspects prior to the incident at the car wash are still under investigation.

The suspects who were apprehended during the course of the search efforts were identified as **Sergio Valenzuela (20-years old) and Jose Tapia Paloma (24-years old)**. Both were transported and booked into the Pima County Jail. Both were charged with **several felony offenses**. In addition, Mr. Tapia Paloma had an **outstanding felony warrant** for his arrest stemming from a parole violation. The warrant was confirmed and served. Booking photographs are being withheld at this time for investigative reasons. The third suspect has not yet been identified.

The Tucson Police Department requests that anyone having information about these individuals and their activities as well as the identity and/or whereabouts of the third suspect are urged to call **911 or 88-Crime**. Citizens can also provide anonymous text and web tips utilizing the **TipSoft program**.

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