



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
November 18, 2022
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley and the Winnebago Boone County Integrity Task Force provide the following update on the officer involved shooting that occurred on November 17, 2022.

It is imperative that the community understand that the following information is based on a preliminary and ongoing investigation, which continues to evolve as investigators interview witnesses, review physical and electronic records, and analyze forensic evidence. The Task Force and the State's Attorney's understanding of the facts and circumstances may change as additional evidence is collected and analyzed. Further, the State's Attorney will, and must, reserve all judgment until the investigation is complete.

On November 17, 2022 at approximately 7:40 PM, Rockton Police Sergeant Ben Heintz of the Rockton Police Department was flagged down by a citizen outside of the Wal-Mart located at 4781 E. Rockton Rd. Roscoe, Illinois. The customer reported an active shoplifting incident in the parking lot. The officer located the suspect and the suspect's vehicle in the Wal-Mart parking lot.

The female suspect Melody Gackstatter was loading a cart full of merchandise into a vehicle. The vehicle was occupied by Austin K. Levitski (12/8/96) who was sitting in the front passenger seat. The officer approached the vehicle and ordered both suspects to exit the vehicle. Levitski transitioned to the driver's seat and placed the vehicle in drive while the Rockton Officer was standing in front of the vehicle.

The Officer put his hands out as the vehicle was coming at him touching the front hood area of the vehicle. The Officer sidestepped the vehicle, escaping being hit by the vehicle. As the vehicle was accelerating at the Officer, the Officer sidestepped the vehicle and fired three rounds at the vehicle.

The vehicle fled the parking lot and continued east on Rockton Rd and then south on IL 251 from Rockton Rd. The officer was joined in the pursuit of the vehicle by the Winnebago County



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Sheriff's Office and the Roscoe Police Dept. The vehicle continued south on IL 251 at speeds over 100 MPH. The vehicle turned from IL 251 near the area of Forest Hills Rd. The vehicle eventually crashed into a garage near 11203 Dorothea Ave. in Machesney Park. Levitski fled on foot before being tazed by officers. Levitski and Gackstatter were both taken into custody shortly after the crash.

Levitski was discovered to be injured and he was transported to Javon Bea MercyHealth Hospital with a gunshot wound to his arm. He is currently in fair condition at Javon Bea Hospital. Levitski has three active warrants for theft from Rockton Police Department and an IDOC warrant out of Wisconsin.

After the officer involved shooting, and at the request of Rockton Police Chief Hollinger, the Winnebago Boone County Integrity Task Force arrived on scene and took over the investigation. Officers from Rockton Police Department will not participate in the investigation.

Task Force investigators are in the preliminary portion of the investigation. Task Force Officers are currently interviewing witnesses, collecting evidence from the scene, and obtaining video evidence, including officers; body and dash camera footage.

At this time, the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office and the Integrity Task Force will not release video evidence during the pendency of the investigation.

Any allegations contained herein are merely allegations and all are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

This press release and further information about the investigation of officer involved shootings can be found at <https://winnebagocountystatesattorney.com/transparency>.

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