

## **One dead after fight leads to fatal shooting at North Carolina mall**

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**CHARLOTTE, N.C.:** A long-standing dispute sparked a shooting at a crowded North Carolina shopping mall on Christmas Eve, police said, and an off-duty officer fatally shot a man who pointed a gun in his direction.

Police said no one else was shot and there were no other reports of injuries. The shooting was not a random act but rather the result of a feud among people who knew each other— though there was no indication it was gang-related, Chief Kerr Putney of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department said.

During the fight, a weapon was brandished and shots were fired about 2 p.m. at Northlake Mall in Charlotte, Putney said. Shoppers who were crowding the mall for last-minute gifts hid in stores and locked themselves inside, officials said. Police could be seen blocking all mall entrances.

Jake Wallace, 24, of Boone, North Carolina, was in Dick's Sporting Goods when shots rang out nearby— about 30 feet outside the store, near Journey's shoe store on the lower level, according to police.

"I thought someone dropped something. It was extremely loud. Didn't think anything of it," Wallace said. "You don't think gunshots. But then I heard a rapid fire. Once hearing that, there was no mistaking it. It sounded like someone was unloading a clip."

Chaos erupted as shoppers dove for cover or tried to get out the door, Wallace said.

Don Willis, who works as a valet at the mall, said he heard gunshots, then saw a wave of people exiting the mall.

"It was wild. I heard the first shot and I thought, 'Wait. What was that?' And kind of like started turning around and walking and saw this huge line of people— wave of people coming— and I thought a bomb was about to go off, and I just took off," he said.

Putney said Officer Thomas Ferguson was working off-duty at the mall when he heard the shots and confronted the man who pointed a gun in his direction.

The officer then "fired his service weapon," Putney said. The suspect was given emergency aid, but medics pronounced him dead shortly afterward, officials said. Police identified him as Daquan Antonio Westbrook, 18.

The officer was placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation, Putney said. Multiple weapons were found at the scene.

No officers were injured. Putney said police were trying to determine whether anyone else was shot.

"That is part of the investigation," he said. "The good thing about this case is that there are a lot of witnesses."

- AP