Two police officers shot dead, one injured in Palm Springs shooting; shooter at large

09/10/2016 21:46 by admin

Palm Springs (US): Two Palm Springs police officers were shot to death on Saturday in California state of the United States while they were trying to resolve a family dispute, a third officer was injured in the shooting.

Police officers were trying to resolve a family dispute when they were shot

The officers had been speaking calmly with the man when he suddenly pulled out a gun and opened fire on them. The shooter was not immediately apprehended.

"It was a simple family disturbance and he elected to open fire on a few of the guardians of the city," police Chief Bryan Reyes, who nearly broke down, told reporters.

Reyes identified the slain officers as Jose "Gil" Gilbert Vega and Lesley Zerebny.

Police said Zerebny recently returned to the force from maternity leave after giving birth to a now-4-month-old daughter. Vega, the father of eight, was a 35-year veteran who planned to retire in December. The wounded officer's name was not released.

Reyes said the three officers were standing near the front door speaking with the man, "trying to negotiate with the suspect to just comply," when he suddenly shot them.

He said the shooter was not apprehended and may still be in the house. He said Riverside County sheriff's SWAT officers had the residence surrounded and were now leading the investigation.

Reyes also urged the media and others not to stream live video of police officers' movements on social media, adding it could put them in danger.

"Understand that we're actively looking for a cop murderer," he said.

Dozens of law enforcement officers converged on the normally quiet residential neighbourhood in this desert resort city after the shooting. They sealed off several blocks and evacuated some residents.

Police Sgt William Hutchinson said officers were warning people already inside their homes to stay there, lock their doors and not answer them until further notice.

Although Reyes didn't identify the shooting suspect, he indicated police had had previous dealings with him.

A neighbour, Frances Serrano, said she called authorities after the father of the shooting suspect came to her house across the street and told her his son was "acting crazy."

"He said his wife left because she was so scared of him," Serrano said, adding the father warned that his son threatened to shoot police if they arrived.

The shooting occurred just three days after a popular Los Angeles County sheriff's sergeant was shot and killed in the high desert town of Lancaster.

- (With AP inputs)