

Beat: News

Gunman kills 5 in small Illinois town before being killed by police

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USPA News - Five people were killed Wednesday and a young girl was critically injured when a gunman opened fire after breaking into their home in a small Illinois town, state police said. The suspected gunman was later killed in a shootout after a brief pursuit.

Illinois State Police Lieutenant Colonel Todd Kilby said first responders discovered five bodies and an injured child at around 4:30 a.m. local time on Wednesday at a residential house in Manchester, a town in Scott County, located around 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Springfield. Relatives identified the victims as 65-year-old Joanne Sinclair, her 22-year-old granddaughter Brittany Luark, her boyfriend Roy Ralston, 5-year-old Nolan Ralston, and 1-year-old Bradley Ralston. An unidentified six-year-old girl suffered gunshot wounds and was rushed to an area hospital where she remained in a critical condition on Thursday. Investigators said it appeared the suspect, identified as 43-year-old Rick Odell Smith of rural Morgan County, had forced his way into the house through the backdoor. Shell casings at the crime scene also indicate that he killed the victims by firing a shotgun at close range, but forensic and ballistic evidence is still being processed. Two of the bodies were discovered in one bedroom, two bodies in another bedroom, and one male adult was discovered deceased in the building's hallway. Witnesses told police that the six-year-old girl had been taken from the residence by Smith and was then handed over to a neighbor. Several hours after the bodies were discovered, Illinois State Police and Winchester City Police came across Smith and a high-speed pursuit ensued. The pursuit came to an end at Illinois Route 106 and Woodson Blacktop, where Smith exited his vehicle before opening fire at police officers. "The officers returned fire, striking the offender ... The offender was taken into custody and transported to an area hospital in critical condition," state police said during a briefing. Smith, who was the nephew of the town's mayor, was later pronounced dead at the hospital at approximately 10:10 a.m. local time. The murders shocked the community in Scott County, where the last known homicide dated back to 1993 and where no multiple homicide had happened in modern history. "The Manchester community is saddened by this tragic loss and on behalf of the Illinois State Police and our law enforcement partners, we offer condolences and support during this time of grief," Illinois State Police Director Hiram Grau said, commending the combined efforts of the law enforcement agencies involved. The exact motive for the violence incident was not immediately known, but local media reports indicated that Smith had been fighting with Sinclair's daughter over the custody of his 4-year-old child.

Article online:

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