

HPD officer connected to deadly raid, shootout relieved of duty

A veteran Houston police narcotics officer has been relieved of duty due to "ongoing questions" that have emerged over his role in a raid last week that ended in a deadly mid-afternoon shootout, police said Thursday. Five police officers were injured - four by gunfire - during the Jan. 28 raid in the 7800 block of Harding Street. The officer relieved of duty was not injured in the raid, officials said.

The home's residents - Dennis Tuttle and Rhogena Nicholas - were killed in the shootout.

"We have confirmed that at least one narcotics officer has been relieved of duty due to ongoing questions that cannot be answered until the case agent is interviewed," police union president Joe Gamaldi said in a written statement

"The department made the decision to relieve the officer of duty while a thorough investigation continues. Nearly all officers relieved of duty return to work quickly after an investigation is complete. Rumors will undoubtedly continue until the case agent is able to be interviewed. Unfortunately, his gunshot wound has resulted in him being incapacitated while surgeries continue. Any assumptions or conclusions made prior to the interview taking place, are just assumptions."

Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo released a statement but did not release any information regarding the officer in question.

"When an officer-involved shooting occurs at HPD, we consider it a legal and moral obligation to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances leading up to and resulting in the officer-involved shooting," Acevedo said. "There is a lot of speculation as to the circumstances regarding this officer-involved shooting at 7815 Harding Street, but we urge everyone to let the investigation take its proper course and proceed to conclusion."

"As I said last Thursday to our community, we will leave no stone unturned to determine the good, the bad and the ugly," he said. "We owe this to the officers involved and their families, the deceased suspects' families and the com-

munity we serve."

The Harris County District Attorney's Office said Thursday it would conduct a civil rights investigation of the shooting and present the findings to a grand jury. Such investigations and grand jury consideration are standard with officer-involved shootings, according to spokesman Dane Schiller.

"Our Civil Rights Division prosecutors are currently working with the Houston Police Department's special investigation team to look at every aspect of this incident," District Attorney Kim Ogg said Thursday in a statement. "As is our policy, every shooting by a police officer -- in every instance -- is presented to a grand jury to determine if any criminal charges are warranted."

He said the DA's office will wait for the Houston police to complete their internal investigation. Prosecutors were at the scene of the shooting, he said, but don't step in for a civil rights investigation until the internal investigation is complete.

Acevedo said the police department is working closely with the district attorney's office.

"I know that in addition to the officer-involved shooting itself, many have questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the search warrant," Acevedo said. "All of these questions are part of our ongoing criminal and administrative investigations. Rather than releasing piecemeal information, consistent with our commitment to transparency, we will report our findings at the conclusion of our investigations."

The drug probe leading up to the botched bust started on Jan. 8, when officials say an anonymous caller phoned police to complain that her daughter was "doing drugs" inside the Harding



Street home.

When officers showed up, they didn't see any suspicious activity, but stopped a passerby to ask if she'd called 911. She hadn't, but - according to what Acevedo told reporters at a Jan. 31 press conference - the woman allegedly turned back to her phone call and said, "Hey the police are at the dope house."

Afterward, police launched a full-on investigation and eventually sent in a confidential informant, authorities said. That buy allegedly netted some quantity of heroin, though officials have never said how much of the drug they recovered.

The next day, police used that purchase as a key piece of their request for a no-knock search warrant at the quiet Pecan Park home. In a three-page sworn affidavit, officers laid out their reasons for the raid.

Before the buy, police said they met with the informant - who'd worked with them on 10 other cases - and searched him for drugs. When he came out, according to the court filing, he turned over a packet of brown powder he called "boy," which is slang for heroin.

The informant also warned police of a "large quantity" of drugs inside, packaged in plastic baggies, and a 9mm handgun, an investigator - whose name was redacted - wrote in the sworn statement.



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Editor's Choice



FILE PHOTO: Abdul Qader Murtada, head of the Houthi delegation, attends a new round of talks to discuss a prisoners swap deal between Yemen's warring parties, in Amman



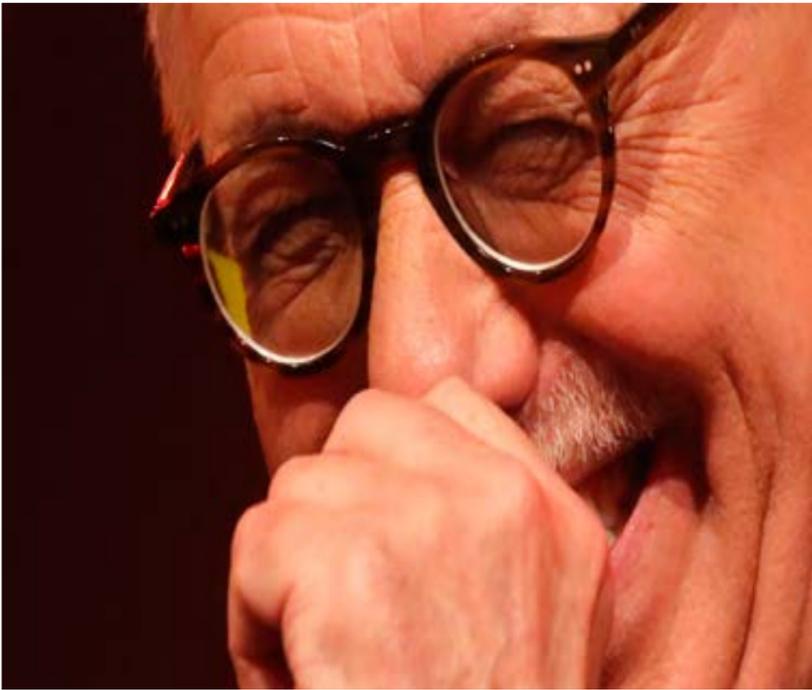
Festival director Dieter Kosslick and members of the International Jury Juliette Binoche, Trudie Styler, Rajendra Roy, Sandra Hueller, Justin Chang and Sebastian Lelio attend for the opening ceremony of the 69th Berlin Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 7, 2019. REUTERS/Hannibal Hanschke



Tear gas is seen as Sudanese demonstrators take part in an anti-government protest in Khartoum



Sudanese demonstrators march during an anti-government protest in Khartoum



Festival director Dieter Kosslick attends for the opening ceremony of the 69th Berlin Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 7, 2019. REUTERS/Hannibal Hanschke



Residents try to rescue a car pushed by the floods to a channel after heavy rains in Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro



U.S. Representative Ocasio-Cortez speaks during a news conference for a proposed "Green New Deal" at the U.S. Capitol in Washington



FILE PHOTO: A worker cuts tomatoes off the vine at a greenhouse in La Piedad, in Michoacan state, Mexico, June 13, 2017. Picture taken June 13, 2017. REUTERS/Alan Ortega/File Photo

Houston To Dallas Bullet Train Gives The Green Light To Local Environmental Company

Plans for the highly-anticipated high-speed bullet train project that will connect Houston to Dallas in 90 minutes are inching along.

On Monday, Texas Central announced via press release that it's partnered with Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) to help protect and enhance natural ecosystems and the environment throughout construction and operations.

RES will oversee plans to comply with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) requirements including restoring, enhancing and preserving wetlands, streams and environmentally sensitive habitats located along the train's route.

The roster of other benefits include the following: For every one mile of high-speed railroad tracks, approximately 450 acres of farmland will be preserved; the high-speed train is estimated to remove more than 14,630 cars per day from Interstate 45, offsetting emissions in an area covering four counties that are in air quality non-attainment status; and Texas will use the newest generation of Shinkansen Japanese trains, the N700 Supreme, which consumes seven percent less energy and weigh seven tons less than the previous model, producing less noise and vibration.

The planned high-speed rail line between Houston and Dallas would use overhead electrical lines and its own separated tracks to shuttle riders between the two metro areas, through mostly flat, rural land. The N700 train is shown in this photo illustration from Texas Central Railway Central.

"As Texans, RES understands the importance that Texans place on preserving the natural beauty of our great state, and we are confident that this systematic approach to restoring and preserving sensitive ecosystems will result in widespread improvements across the region and beyond," project delivery director at Texas Central Bill Tucker said in the release.

The project's scale allows RES to identify both isolated pockets along the route that require restoration, and also entire com-



Plans for the highly-anticipated high-speed bullet train project, which will connect Houston to Dallas in 90 minutes, are inching along. Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



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The results will help strengthen and connect wildlife habitat corridors, improve water quality along the route and increase flood resiliency.

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Texas Central Partners announced Feb. 5, 2018, it had chosen Northwest Mall as its preferred high-speed rail station in the Houston area.

What's more, the project is expected to create an estimated 10,000 jobs each year of construction and 1,500 full-time jobs when operational.

Things to know about Houston-Dallas high-speed bullet train beginning construction in 2019

Hold onto your seats. Construction on the new high-speed bullet train connecting Houston and Dallas will finally begin in late 2019, according to WFAA in Dallas.

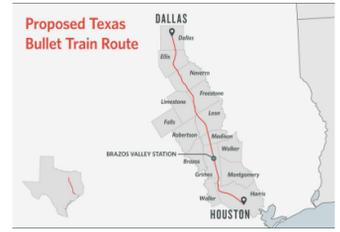
The Houston-Dallas line, the United States' first bullet train, will take 90 minutes with one stop in the Brazos Valley.

Partners: Texas Central taps Renfe as operating partner

Texas Central, the developer behind the proposed high-speed rail line between Houston and Dallas, has tapped Renfe as the train's operating partner.

The Spanish rail operator, in partnership with Spanish railway infrastructure company Adif, will provide technical advice on the design and construction of the Tex-

as Central railway, and assist with its operation and maintenance plans. Once the railway is built, the company will run the trains, maintain engines and signals and oversee ticketing and passenger programs. Renfe, which has 14,000 employees and revenues of \$4.1 billion, brings more than 25 years of experience to the project.



"Renfe has established a reputation for excellence in railroad operation in Spain and across the world, and we welcome them aboard," Texas Central CEO Carlos Aguilar said in a statement.

Texas company gets \$300M loan for high-speed train project

Renfe is the latest international company to partner with Texas Central on the high-speed rail project. Earlier this year, Texas Central announced it is working with Salini Impregilo, operating in the U.S. as The Lane Construction Corp. to lead the civil construction on the rail line.

The Texas Central rail line will be built and operated without taxpayer funded state or federal grants. The 200 mph train, based on the Japanese Shinkansen bullet train technology, will allow passengers to go between Houston and Dallas in 90 minutes, with a midway stop in the Brazos Valley.

Texas Central is working with Federal Railroad Administration officials to finalize the rail lines environmental impact

review, which will help determine the project's timeline and final route.

Texas Central is using technology from Japan's high-speed "Shinkansen" train, which travels at 177-miles per hour.

Texas will likely get version of Japan's N7001 model train, with several modifications including eight cars instead of 16.

In Japan, passengers can walk up and purchase tickets minutes before departure, paying the same amount as those who bought tickets in advance.



The high-speed train proposed by Texas Central Partners would run on tracks elevated on berms or concrete supports, as seen in these renderings the company released on Feb. 5, 2018. (Photo/Texas Central Partners)

While Texas Central has not revealed how much a ticket will cost for the Houston-Dallas route, the price will supposedly be competitive with airline fares.

Possible train terminal: Northwest Mall could gain new life as terminal for Houston-Dallas bullet train

Expect the interior of the Texas train to have economy and First Class cars with high ceilings, two seats on each side of a wide aisle, and large seats with plenty of legroom.

The privately funded Texas bullet train is now awaiting final approval from the Federal Railroad Administration. Once that permission is granted, Texas Central will then begin looking for financial backers.



Texas Central released renderings of its proposed Dallas station on Jan. 29, 2018. The station is planned for a vacant tract south of downtown. (Photo/Texas Central Partners)

Texas Central reportedly has options to purchase a third of the land needed for its venture and is currently negotiating for the remainder. (Courtesy houstonchronicle.com)

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