

Cheektowaga officers injured by suspect who fled traffic stop, rammed patrol car

Various charges filed against driver

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Two Cheektowaga police officers were injured Tuesday morning when a suspect fled a traffic stop and later rammed a patrol car, police reported.

Neither officer suffered life-threatening injuries but the incident illustrated just how dangerous a traffic stop can be even in broad daylight as police in recent months have come under increased public scrutiny because of civilian deaths involving officers elsewhere in the country, according to authorities.

“In any training that police do, and this starts right at the academy, we never use the word routine when describing a traffic stop,” Cheektowaga Assistant Police Chief James J. Speyer said. “The traffic stop Tuesday did put the officers in a life-threatening situation.”

One officer was treated at Sisters of Charity Hospital, St. Joseph Campus, for a strained arm and released, while the other still was being treated for arm and knee injuries, police said.

Brandon Moultrie, 27, of Buffalo, was taken into custody. Speyer said Moultrie has been charged with felony counts of assault in the second degree, reckless endangerment, unlawfully fleeing from a police officer, aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle because of prior suspension of his driver’s license and criminal mischief.

Officers had pulled over a car on Eggert Road, near the Kensington Expressway, at about 8:50 a.m. and were trying to remove the driver, Moultrie, who kept changing his story and gave a false name, according to Speyer.

“As they opened the door to remove him, he took off,” Speyer said.

Officer Chris Lovallo had his hands on the driver and was dragged a short distance, Speyer said. Lovallo suffered the strained arm.

Moultrie fled north on Eggert, then got onto the westbound Kensington Expressway, police said. “A short time later, we located the vehicle in the Cedargrove area,” Speyer continued. As officers were trying to stop the car, Moultrie rammed a patrol car driven by Officer Dominic Schwartz, Speyer said. Schwartz was treated for arm and knee injuries and required stitches.

Attorney Thomas H. Burton, who has often represented area police officers in deadly force cases, said the big challenge for police is to make the right decision in an instant. “You want to ensure that an

officer knows when he can use force or deadly force but, on the other hand, not make them so hesitant that they end up hurt or worse,” Burton said. “It’s those two considerations that an officer must weigh in a split second with the outcome often having grave consequences.”

Speyer commended the officers for handling themselves in a professional manner. “After the crash, the guy fled the car and we ended up chasing him and having to tackle him, but nobody was injured when that occurred,” Speyer said. “This all goes to show you how quickly things can change into a life-threatening situation, and police officers confront this all the time.”

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