

Suspect nearly hits Cheektowaga Police officers during chase

By **Jim Herr** - April 5, 2019



CHEEKTOWAGA – A handful of Cheektowaga Police officers were nearly hit by a fleeing motor vehicle as the officers were attending to a separate crash scene on the Kensington Expressway Sunday evening.

The events surrounding the incident started around 6:40 pm when a patrol officer attempted to stop a suspect who had outstanding warrants.

The officer attempted to stop a 2005 Audi A4 driving eastbound on Genesee Street near Sonwil Drive, but he took off at a high rate of speed towards Lancaster.

The chase lasted for a few moments and a notice was put out to area law enforcement about the encounter. A source tells Cheektowaga Chronicle that the chase was short lived because the officers knew the driver from past encounters and he failed to stop.

Around an hour later, Lancaster and Depew police officers started chasing the Audi. At the same time, Cheektowaga Police officers were attending to a multi-vehicle crash that shut down the westbound Kensington Expressway near the New York State Thruway.

Sgt. John Wanat was logging plates of the vehicles involved in the crash. Moments later, the Audi blew past a police officer preventing traffic from getting to the crash scene.

"...[inaudible] at the accident lookout," the officer shouted over the radio.

Moments later, a police dispatcher relayed the warning to the officers and the Audi reaches the crash scene.

"94, I'll have charges. He almost took me out over here," one officer said at the crash scene. "Reckless endangerment, he almost took me out here. He destroyed the barrier."

Sgt. Wanat jumped on the radio.

"I got one at gunpoint on the bridge," he said.

The police took Scott M. Nowak, 39, into custody. He faces 32 charges – the most serious were four counts of Felony Reckless Endangerment and one count of Felony Criminal Mischief. The balance was made up of various vehicle and traffic violations including the unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, driving without insurance, speeding, fleeing the police, leaving the scene of an accident, and an interlock device violation.

Mr. Nowak appeared Friday afternoon in the Cheektowaga Justice Court before Judge James Speyer because a felony hearing was scheduled to take place.

A handful of police officers were set to testify about what happened to them Sunday night but the defendant changed his mind about having the hearing. Susan Karalus is his attorney and she tells Cheektowaga Chronicle that the possibility of a plea consideration once the case gets downtown was one reasons for the change of heart.

"He's not denying the charges, but I think anytime you don't have a driver's license and the police make contact with you, some people just get this adrenalin rush and runoff from the cops, Ms. Karalus said. "I think that's what started it."

She says Mr. Nowak has had a few encounters with the police including DWI. He was also arraigned Friday afternoon before Judge Speyer for possession of a hypodermic needle and possession of marijuana.

The case will now go to the Erie County Grand Jury. Ms. Karalus hopes she can discuss a plea deal with prosecutors and possibly get Mr. Nowak into a drug rehab program.

The Audi was impounded by police after it crashed into a \$300 traffic device. When Mr. Nowak reached police headquarters he was examined by an ambulance crew. He remained at the cellblock.

He remains in custody.

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