



Westerville, Ohio, Police Chief Calls Slain Officers “True American Heroes”

The people of Ohio, from Governor John Kasich on down, are mourning the deaths of two police officers who were shot and killed responding to a 911 call in the city of Westerville on the afternoon of February 10.

WOSU radio in Columbus reported that Westerville Police Chief Joe Morbitzer, who was overcome with emotion to the point of struggling to hold back tears, described the course of events during a press conference.



“At 12:10 [February 10] the officers arrived on the scene,” Morbitzer said. “As they went into the apartment, they were immediately met with gunfire and both officers were shot.”

The two officers were Eric Joering (left), a 17-year police veteran who died at the scene, and Anthony Morelli (right), a 30-year veteran of the force who was transported to a hospital and died a short while later.

The officers were “true American heroes” and “were two of the best we had,” Morbitzer told those gathered.

“This was their calling, and they did it right,” said the chief.

Joering and Morelli were responding to a 911 call that police received at 12:02 p.m., officials said. The caller hung up, after which the officers went to the apartment complex on the outskirts of Westerville to investigate.

A report published by Cincinnati.com said a female voice could be heard on a recording of the 911 call before the call was disconnected.

In a series of calls, the caller said, “please help, please help” and “my husband shot the police officers, and my daughter is in there.”

In one of the calls with dispatchers, the woman identified the man who shot at the officers as her husband, Quentin Smith, and police confirmed to the Associated Press that Smith is the suspect in the shooting.

The *Columbus Dispatch* reported that Smith was shot during his encounter with police and was being treated for his injuries. He was charged on February 11 in Franklin County Municipal Court with two counts of aggravated murder.

“If Smith survives his injuries, this case would be eligible for the death penalty under Ohio law because the victims were police officers killed in the line of duty, and there was more than one victim,” Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O’Brien said in a statement.

The Westerville police said they had several interactions with Smith since last year. In November, his wife requested a protection order against him, saying “he carries a gun all of the time” and threatened to kill her, their daughter, and himself if she left him.



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 13, 2018

However, the problem was not the gun, but that, under the law, Smith was prohibited from owning a gun because he is a convicted felon.

The *Columbus Dispatch* reported that Smith was arrested in October 2008 and indicted on charges of aggravated burglary, burglary, domestic violence, and assault, according to Cuyahoga County court records.

In May 2009, Smith pleaded guilty to one count of burglary with a gun specification and one count of domestic violence. He was sentenced to three years, with credit for 215 jail days served, according to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Smith was in prison from June 2009 through October 2011, mostly at the Richland Correctional Institution in Mansfield, according to prison records. He was released from probation in early November 2013.

Records obtained by the Associated Press on February 12 indicated that Smith admitted to beating up an inmate at Richland Correctional Institution in 2011. The records show Smith punched and kicked an inmate while the inmate was the ground. For that offense, he was punished with 15 days in a cell segregated from the general population.

Another report from Fox News revealed how Smith, a convicted felon, was able to obtain a gun he was legally prohibited from possessing. Federal prosecutors said a man named Gerald Lawson of suburban Cleveland has been accused of buying the handgun for Smith last summer.

A criminal complaint filed against Lawson in federal court on February 12 said Smith gave Lawson the money to buy the gun along with \$100 for completing the transaction. Authorities said Lawson and Smith were longtime friends, and that Lawson knew Smith could not legally have a weapon.

The significance of this subterfuge, along with Smith's long history of violent behavior and his criminal record, is that the "villain" in this tragic case is not the gun, but the ruthless criminal who broke the law by possessing it in the first place.

As Chief Morbitzer so aptly stated, Joering and Morelli were "true American heroes" who died responding to the frantic call for help from a woman in distress. Their actions were extraordinary compared to most people's, but were not unusual for police officers in today's society. Our police officers risk their lives to protect the lives and property of others on a daily basis across our nation.

In recent years, however, leftists have waged a war on our police, in an attempt to render them ineffective and to use this perceived ineffectiveness as an excuse to replace local police with federally controlled law-enforcement agencies. In order to expose this attack on our police, The John Birch Society, with which *The New American* is affiliated, years ago launched the nationwide "Support Your Local Police" campaign. However, there is much more to the campaign than giving well-deserved support to our brave police officers. It is not just a "support your local police" campaign, as important as that is, but a campaign to keep our local police independent. We must keep the police independent, and not allow them to be controlled by the federal government.

To learn more about this campaign and this important issue, we recommend you read the related articles listed below.

Photo: AP Images



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