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Three Police Officers Killed, Four Wounded in Baton Rouge

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(CN) - Three police officers were killed and four others wounded in Baton Rouge, Louisiana Sunday morning while on duty less than a mile from police headquarters.

Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Casey Rayborn Hicks said one suspect is dead and law enforcement officials believe two others are still at large.

Baton Rouge Police Sgt. Don Coppola, speaking on local television station WAFB, said he did not know exactly how many officers have been injured, but that the wounded were rushed to a local hospital.

A Louisiana State Police spokesman said the gunman was shot, but his condition is currently unknown.

In a statement distributed via Twitter, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said "This is an unspeakable and unjustified attack on all of us at a time when we need unity and healing.

"Rest assured, every resource available to the State of Louisiana will be used to ensure the perpetrators are swiftly brought to justice. For now, I'm asking all Louisianians to join ... in praying for the officers who were involved and their families as the details continue to unfold," the governor said.

The shooting occurred just before 9 a.m. local time, virtually around the corner from police headquarters on Airline Highway.

A witness told local television station WBRZ that a man dressed in black with his face covered was shooting indiscriminately as he walked between a convenience store and a car wash.

Police armed with rifles set up a road block around the crime scene and were stopping motorists in the area, checking trucks and vehicle interiors before allowing them to drive on. A SWAT team is also in the area.

In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, about 20 officers were on the scene in bulletproof vests and a police helicopter was flying overhead.

Multiple police units were stationed at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, where stricken officers were believed to be undergoing treatment at a trauma center. A police officer with a long gun was blocking the parking lot at the emergency room.

Officers and deputies from the Baton Rouge Police Department and East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office were involved, according to Hicks.

Tensions have been high between the Baton Rouge police and the local community since the killing of 37-year-old Alton Sterling, a black man, by white police officers early on the morning of July 5.

The killing, which followed a scuffle outside a convenience store, was captured on cellphone video and circulated widely on the internet.

It was followed a day later by the shooting death of another black man in Minnesota, whose girlfriend livestreamed the aftermath of his death on Facebook.

Then on Thursday, July 7, a black gunman in Dallas opened fire on police at a protest about the police shootings, killing five officers.

Over the next weekend, thousands of people took to the streets in Baton Rouge to condemn Sterling's death, including hundreds of demonstrators who congregated outside the police station. Authorities arrested about 200 people during those protests and came under criticism for what some saw as a use of excessive force against the protestors.

- *Developing story.*

Photo caption: Baton Rouge city police officers talk to the driver of a car near the scene of a mass shooting of police officers that has left at least three dead and four wounded. (Mike Krunzelman/AP)

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