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## Police

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Article published Tuesday, March 28, 2006

### Gunman identified in I-75 chase, shootout at Bluffton-area store

#### Police may have fired 50 times at assailant in bulletproof vest

By **STEVE MURPHY**  
**BLADE STAFF**  
**WRITER**



Ohio Highway Patrol Capt. Richard Collins said it was unclear whether authorities knew at first that a Canadian woman was in the targeted vehicle with the gunman. ( THE BLADE/HERRAL LONG )

FINDLAY — A Detroit-area man who was killed Saturday in a shootout with police outside a Bluffton-area carryout was heavily armed and wearing a bulletproof vest when he opened fire on the officers, authorities said yesterday.

Hancock County Sheriff Michael Heldman said authorities identified Donti Jamal Henry, 29, from fingerprint records.

Dr. Leroy Schroeder, county coroner, said two bullets hit Henry, one in the jaw and the other a fatal shot in the neck.

**VIDEO**

- [Bluffton shootout](#)

Authorities said Henry used bogus documents to try to obtain an Ohio driver's license at a state license bureau in Bowling Green, then fled police who responded to

the office and led state troopers and sheriff's deputies on a 40-mile chase on southbound I-75.

When state troopers cornered Henry at the Sterling Stores location off the State Rt. 103 interchange, he jumped out of a minivan with a gun in each hand and

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opened fire on the officers. Three troopers and a Wood County sheriff's deputy returned fire during a shootout that lasted 34 seconds, according to authorities.

**SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**



Donti Jamal Henry exits the rented minivan at the Sterling station with a gun in each hand.



Henry points one of the guns at Trooper Brian Snyder-Hernandez's car.



An officer works his way around the minivan, preparing to fire at Henry.



A highway patrol trooper crouches behind the minivan Henry abandoned.



The trooper rises and aims toward Henry, who has been shot in the front seat of an SUV to the right of the minivan.

To view the video, go to [toledoblade.com](http://toledoblade.com).

Henry shot and wounded two Ohio Highway Patrol troopers and a Canadian woman suffered a superficial gunshot wound after the gunman jumped into her sport utility vehicle as her husband was filling it with gasoline.

"At the end of the day, the good guys won," said Capt. Richard Collins, commander of the Findlay district of the Ohio Highway Patrol. "That's how I feel."

Wood County Sheriff Mark Wasylyshyn said it was "very likely" that one of his deputies, Greg Panning, fired the shot that killed Henry.

The sheriff said Deputy Panning was at the edge of the road about 80 feet away, with a clear shot at Henry, who was inside the driver's side of the Canadian couple's SUV.

"I look at my deputy as a hero because he most likely saved those two troopers' lives," Sheriff Wasylyshyn said. "He did exactly what he should have done, when he should have done it."

The sheriff said Deputy Panning, another deputy at the scene, and the entire shift on duty at the time were referred to counselors Saturday.

Sheriff Wasylyshyn said he told Deputy Panning to take Sunday off and allowed him to report yesterday for previously scheduled training in Columbus.

The troopers involved in the shooting have been placed on administrative leave, Captain Collins said.

**50 shots estimated**

Authorities estimated that officers fired 50 shots at Henry. The driver's-side door of the Canadian couple's SUV was riddled with bullets.

The couple, Rick and Janina Heiber, of London, Ont., have since resumed a trip to Florida in a replacement car provided by Hancock County.

Captain Collins said it was unclear whether the troopers knew at first that Ms. Heiber was in the vehicle with the gunman, but that Trooper Brian Snyder-Hernandez yelled to the other officers after seeing her.

"But for the grace of God and her being able to get as low as possible

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in the front passenger seat, she would have been another fatality," Hancock County Prosecutor Bob Fry said.

Trooper Albert Leitenberger, of the patrol's Findlay post, was shot in the right forearm and underwent surgery yesterday in St. Rita's Medical Center in Lima, Captain Collins said.

Trooper Chuck Grizzard, of the Walbridge post, was shot in the right hand and treated for a superficial wound.

In addition, Trooper Snyder-Hernandez, of the Findlay post, was treated for an arm injury he suffered in a fall at the scene.

Discussing Trooper Leitenberger's wound, Captain Collins said, "It's rather serious. He's been able to move his fingers, and that's encouraging ... He's a pretty tough guy."

Investigators said they're still trying to figure out why Henry fled from officers and fired on them.

Besides a .223 rifle and a foreign handgun, the gunman had a third weapon, another handgun, in the vehicle, and was carrying ammunition, according to Keith Williamson, an agent with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

#### 'This man had a plan'

"This man had a plan," Mr. Fry said. "Something was going on inside his head, and we may never know. But like Captain Collins said, at least the good guys came out on top."

At the Bowling Green license bureau Saturday morning, Henry presented a Georgia birth certificate that employees believed was fake. When Henry became agitated, the employees called city police.

During a scuffle, Henry pulled a gun out of his waistband and fired a shot in the air. He fled the office in a minivan with a Michigan plate, dropped off a woman near the Wooster Street entrance to I-75, then drove south on the expressway at speeds over 100 mph.

A short time later, police arrested Barbara Jean Clark, 27, of Southfield, Mich., who was walking along I-75.



Henry

[Zoom](#) | [Photo Reprints](#)

She was charged with conspiracy to commit theft, a third-degree felony, and remained in the Wood County jail last night.

Bowling Green police Chief Tom Votava said investigators have discovered that Ms. Clark, whom he described as "somewhat" cooperative, is pregnant. He said it's unknown whether Henry is the father.

Chief Votava said Ms. Clark was charged with conspiracy to commit theft, which carries a maximum prison term of five years, because Henry used fake documents to try to get the identification card.

"There's an attempt to gain that ID through theft, through deception," Chief Votava said.

During the ensuing chase, Henry ran over three sets of stop sticks placed on the

highway. The final set, near Bluffton, punctured at least one of the vehicle's tires, forcing him to exit I-75.

Video footage taken from a camera mounted in Trooper Snyder-Hernandez's car shows the 2006 Chrysler minivan swerving onto the grassy center median of the highway, then back across both southbound lanes and onto the shoulder.

Pursued by officers, the minivan exits the highway and turns right into the Sterling parking lot, driving between rows of gas pumps and past the carryout, the video shows. The vehicle jumps a curb and drives across a grass strip and a road into the parking lot of a BP gas station.

After driving around the BP station, the minivan sideswipes the pursuing trooper's cruiser, then speeds between rows of gas pumps and drives over a grassy area and crosses the street back to the Sterling station.

### Points gun at police

Henry circles around the station's gas pumps, then stops the van and gets out. In the video, he points a gun back at the pursuing cruiser, then turns and points a weapon at another patrol car at the front left of his vehicle.

He runs around the front of the minivan and out of the frame, and troopers can be seen firing at him.

"My understanding is the suspect started firing when he started getting out of the vehicle," Sheriff Wasylyshyn said. "He had a gun in both hands and he was firing with both guns."

Mr. Fry said he would present the case to the Hancock County grand jury after toxicology tests are completed on Henry, which is expected to take about a month.

"Obviously, this is a homicide," the prosecutor said.

"Whenever there is an unnatural taking of someone's life, that's a homicide. In this particular case, we obviously have a duty to investigate all homicides. He added that the videotape would be presented to the grand jury.

"I think the tape is pretty evident in terms of why the officers acted in the way and the fashion that they did, and why they had to react that way," Mr. Fry said.

Authorities said Henry had a long record of drug and traffic-related offenses.

He was imprisoned from December, 2002 to January, 2004, for a drug-delivery offense in Wayne County, Michigan, and was awaiting sentencing on a Jan. 27 conviction for a similar offense, according to officials at the Wayne County clerk of courts' office.

Contact Steve Murphy at: [smurphy@theblade.com](mailto:smurphy@theblade.com) or 419-724-6078.

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