

NEW BEDFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

871 Rockdale Avenue · New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740 · www.newbedfordpd.com



PRESS RELEASE

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Lieutenant Jeffrey P. Silva

Public Information Officer

Office: 508.991.6300 – Ext. 148

Email: jpsilva@newbedford-ma.gov

See Also: 09-3876

BARRICADED SUSPECT ARRESTED AFTER STANDOFF ENDS PEACEFULLY

Just after noon today, New Bedford Police patrol officers assigned to the North District were dispatched to 326 Ashley Boulevard to assist the Bristol County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office had sought to arrest a man (*later determined to be LIONEL LAWSON [7/26/1976]*) on a warrant however he avoided capture by jumping down from a second floor, rear porch and fleeing on foot. After assisting the Sheriff's Office search for LIONEL LAWSON to no avail, New Bedford Police Officers cleared the scene.

A short time later while canvassing the neighborhood, Bristol County Sheriff's Deputies encountered a male later determined to be ANTHONY LAWSON (12/6/1960). ANTHONY LAWSON is the brother of the original suspect LIONEL LAWSON. While speaking to ANTHONY LAWSON in the third floor, north apartment at 326 Ashley Boulevard, Bristol County Sheriff's Deputies asked him for permission to search his apartment to check if his brother, LIONEL LAWSON, was there. ANTONIO LAWSON responded angrily and threatened deputies stating that he had gasoline and a candle and was going to "blow up the house" if they did not leave.

At that time, approximately 12:49 PM, the Bristol County Sheriff's Office called the New Bedford Police for assistance and it was determined that, in addition to the gasoline and candle that ANTONIO LAWSON claimed to have, propane or ethylene gas was also detected in the air. Given the severity of the circumstances, the New Bedford Police Special Reaction Team (SRT) was called in. The SRT (aka SWAT team) consists of a group of specially trained police officers equipped with specialized weapons, tactics and training including negotiators to handle such situations. Upon their arrival, an evacuation of 326 Ashley Boulevard took place during which time one resident was removed from the building and others were prevented from entering. Residents from the adjacent homes were also evacuated, prevented from entering or told to remain inside their homes depending on their proximity to 326 Ashley Boulevard. As part of the standard protocol for such instances, the New Bedford Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services personnel were summoned to the scene and NSTAR was called in to assist with gas and electric issues should they be needed. In fact, a decision was made very early in the incident to have NSTAR shut off the gas and electrical service to the home where the suspect was located as well as the surrounding area in an effort to limit the damage an explosion could cause to the suspect, emergency personnel and residents should the suspect attempt to cause any type of explosion.

Trained police negotiators attempted to speak with ANTONIO LAWSON and were able to engage in a lengthy conversation with him in an effort to arrange for his peaceful surrender. When it became apparent that ANTONIO LAWSON's voluntary surrender was not likely however, and once it was determined that it was safe to do so, members of the New Bedford Police SRT made entry into LAWSON's third floor apartment. Although the door was barricaded, officers were able to get inside the apartment within moments and ANTONIO LAWSON was taken into custody without further incident. A search of the residence was then conducted and several cans of propane fuel, an assortment of knives and a hand-held propane torch (*like those used by plumbers for soldering pipes*) were recovered.

ANTONIO LAWSON was injured however he was transported to St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford as a precautionary measure to be evaluated both physically and psychiatrically. LAWSON was charged criminally with: (1) Disturbing the peace; (2) Threats to commit murder; and, (3) Warrant for motor vehicle offenses and is expected to be arraigned in New Bedford 3rd District Court tomorrow morning on those charges.

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