

Central Playground shooting: arrests, more patrols

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, city police and officials from the Essex County Prosecutor's Office announced they have made headway in recent cases, including the shooting incident at Central Playground on April 17.

In the aftermath of the shootings that occurred on April 17 between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. at the Central Playground, Orange Police said they have stepped up law enforcement in the vicinity, and have made arrests in connection with other recent shootings in the neighborhood.

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr., who works as a police officer in West Orange, said Orange Police Department patrols in the area have been increased, and more detectives have been assigned to the investigation in order to protect children in the playground at nearby Orange Preparatory Academy. Hawkins said these efforts have led to good public-safety results in the vicinity of Central and Lincoln avenues.

"Anyone who commits violence in Orange will find that they will be arrested and their crime will be swiftly and severely punished," Hawkins said on Tuesday. "Our schools and playgrounds must remain safe and the shooting of children in the Central Playground has been answered by a crackdown on criminals who hang out at the playground or on the surrounding blocks. I want to thank the officers and detectives of the Orange Police Department who are manning increased patrols in the area."

In the wake of the playground shooting, Hawkins and Police Director John Rappaport said a number of arrests have been made related to the ongoing investigation. The Department is working with the Essex County Prosecutor's Office to solve the case.

The following is a summary of recent police activity in the Central Playground area. Police and city officials said all the arrests occurred at or around Central Playground, or involve neighboring Taylor, Chapman and Hickory streets.

- On April 20, police said detectives Stefanelli, Cassidy, Imbert and Baptist were on patrol in the Central Playground area and arrested Tyrell Myricks, 24, for active Orange warrants.

- On April 20, police said officers responded to the nearby South Center and Taylor streets following shots fired at Central Playground.

"During that investigation, no shell casings were recovered and no bullets. Officers arrested David White, 23, and Gregory Polhill, 22, for active Orange warrants and an open Forked River warrant. Both were arrested without incident, and the investigation is continuing," Rappaport said.

- On April 21, police said that Detective Lt. Dunn, along with detectives Malia, Imbert and Stefanelli, were on patrol in the area of Scotland Road and Highland Avenue when they observed a gold Audi, with an out-of-state temporary registration, disregard a traffic signal.

"This vehicle also fit the description of a vehicle involved

in a prior shooting incident in East Orange," Rappaport said. "It also fit the description of the vehicle used in the April 20 playground shooting. The vehicle was pursued to the area of 23 Harvard St., East Orange, where it crashed into a tree."

Rappaport said the driver, later identified as Raphael Williams, 26, of East Orange, attempted to flee the scene on foot but was apprehended.

"Further investigation found that the vehicle was reported stolen from Newark," Rappaport said. "Detectives also recovered a Ruger 9mm semi-automatic handgun loaded with hollow-point bullets; a Colt Python .357 caliber revolver fully loaded with hollow-point bullets; a pair of black gloves; 66 'baggies' of crack cocaine; and three 'baggies' of marijuana."

- On April 23, police said officers responded to a report of shots fired in front of 193 Chapman St. At the scene, police said they found four silver, 9 mm shell casings.

"Lakeeah May was detained for questioning. After Ms. May refused to cooperate in the investigation, she was arrested on an outstanding East Orange warrant," Rappaport said.

- On April 24 Charles McBee of East Orange was arrested for the Chapman Street shooting.

Police said that the investigations into the April 17 shooting at Central Playground and the other incidents are open and ongoing. Anyone with information about the cases may call the Orange Police Department at 973-266-4111 or the Essex County Prosecutor's Office at 877- 847-7432.