Beat: News

Reports: SWAT team thwarted from stopping Navy Yard gunman

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USPA News - U.S. Capitol Police launched an investigation Wednesday after media reports claimed an elite tactical team was abruptly recalled from responding to Monday`s mass shooting at the Washington Navy Yard before local police officers confronted the gunman. Local TV station WUSA, quoting law enforcement sources, said the Capitol Police Containment & Emergency Response Team (CERT) was less than 30 seconds away from the main gate at the Washington Navy Yard when an initial call went out regarding an active shooter at the facility.

The team of four men, armed with assault rifles and dressed in full tactical gear, arrived at the main gate moments later and received a request for help from a Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officer who said there were no others on the site who were equipped to stop the gunman. But when the team radioed their superiors, they were ordered by a watch commander to stand down and leave the scene. The Capitol Police CERT officers are expert marksmen who specifically train for active shooter situations, and their arrival at the main gate happened more than 40 minutes before gunman Aaron Alexis was killed in a shootout with local police officers. "I don`t think it`s a far stretch to say that some lives may have been saved if we were allowed to intervene," a Capitol Police source told the BBC. Responding to the reports, Capitol Police Chief Kim Dine said he asked the Capitol Police Board to lead an independent fact review of the agency`s response to the shooting. "I take our response to this tragedy and our support to law enforcement partners very seriously," he said. "While I am the Chief of Police, at my core I am a police officer who feels strongly about our shared commitment and responsibilities." In a statement, the Capitol Police Board said it had established a fact review team which will be led by former U.S. Secret Service Assistant Director Michael Stenger. "The Fact Review Team will conduct a thorough examination of the facts and circumstances of the USCP response to the shooting," it said, adding that it will report its findings and recommendations no later than October 21. Also on Wednesday, Cathleen Alexis apologized to the victims and said she did not know why her son carried out the shooting rampage. "I don`t know why he did what he did and I`ll never be able to ask him why," she said. "Aaron is now in a place where he can no longer do harm to anyone, and for that I am glad." Monday`s massacre at the Navy Yard resulted in the deaths of thirteen people - including the gunman - and injured eight others, making it the deadliest incident in Washington, D.C. since a 1982 plane crash. The incident briefly put the U.S. Senate and other buildings on lockdown as authorities were investigating whether more gunmen were involved.

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