

Woman, 92, dies in shootout with cops Three Atlanta officers serving warrants hurt

By [Jeffry Scott](#), [S.A. Reid](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 11/22/06

A 92-year-old woman was killed after she shot three Atlanta narcotics officers Tuesday night when they broke down the front door of her home trying to serve a search warrant, police said. One officer was hit in the arm, one was struck in the shoulder and one was shot in the thigh. All were rushed to Grady Memorial Hospital, where they were in stable condition late Tuesday night. Police did not release their names.

Atlanta assistant police Chief Alan Dreher, in a news conference outside the hospital emergency room, declined to confirm the identity of the woman, but said the warrant was served at the correct address. Sarah C. Dozier, also speaking at the hospital, identified the dead woman as her aunt, Kathryn Johnston. Dozier said her aunt worried about crime in the neighborhood where she had lived for about 17 years, and might have thought the police were intruders.

"Every window in her home and every door on her home has burglar bars," said Dozier. "I talked to her the other day about a 72-year-old who was raped. I know she was just scared." Dozier said her aunt was healthy and vigorous and lived alone. She said she talked to her aunt every day and was looking forward to her annual Thanksgiving dinner at her aunt's home.

Dreher, the assistant police chief, said that as far as he knew the narcotics officers did "everything by the book. They had a search warrant, they announced themselves and knocked first." He said he did not know what name was on the warrant. The woman was the only person in the home at the time, he said. Dreher said the incident is still under investigation and "will be for days." He declined to say how many shots were fired and what kind of gun the woman had. Dozier said her aunt owned a pistol and she had a permit. "I don't know what kind and it was rusty, but apparently it was working well," she said.

A neighbor, Yolanda Jackson, 42, said she was sitting on the front porch of her home on Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard a block away when undercover narcotics officers, who were not in street uniforms, showed up around 7 p.m. to serve the warrant at Johnston's home, at 933 Neal St. "I heard 'pow, pow, pow, pow,'" said Jackson. "A whole lot of gunfire, really fast." She estimated the number of shots at between 16 and 24. She said within five minutes, "about 20" police cars swarmed into the area. A few minutes later ambulances showed up and a helicopter was hovering over the neighborhood, which is an intown mix of dilapidated and well-kept homes, houses being refurbished and a few new infill houses.

By 8:15 p.m. police had Neal Street blocked off from the corner of Joseph Lowery as investigators went in and out of the home bringing out bags of evidence, according to neighbors, and TV news crews set up street shots. The shooting came on the same day that the district attorney in neighboring DeKalb County announced she would ask for a grand jury to review Police Department investigations of 12 deadly police shootings there this year. Some of Johnston's neighbors made the connection. "The same thing is happening here as is going on in DeKalb County," said neighbor Tony Torrance. "Police are shooting people. They aren't following procedure."

Atlanta police declined to say what they were searching for when they went to Johnston's home. Dozier said she plans to hire a lawyer to find out what really happened. "As far as I'm concerned, they shot her down like a dog."