Police Officer Kaia Lafay Grant | Springdale Police Department



Badge 23
Age: 33
Served: 7 years, 7 months
August 22, 2012 to March 21, 2020

OFFICER

Kaia was born October 18, 1986 at Bethesda Oak Hospital in Cincinnati to Kevin Cornell and Gina Rebecca Grant. She was raised in the City of Wyoming and an avid athlete; participated in soccer, baseball, skateboarding, snowboarding, rock climbing, swimming, tai chi, tennis, and basketball.

Kaia was an honor student at Wyoming High School and graduated in 2005. She was “the kind of person you would want as a police officer,” said Darby Lyons, who taught English for decades at Wyoming High School and counted Grant among a group of top students in her honors English class during the 2003-04 academic

year. When she was 18, Kaia received a YMCA Southwestern Ohio Character Award for volunteerism.

She was offered scholarships to West Point, The George Washington University and John Hopkins, but chose to attend the College of William and Mary in Virginia. She studied economics and government with visions of going into politics. While there, she interned in the United States Senate, including for Senator Joe Biden, and on more than one occasion enjoyed chatting with senators over a beer. She graduated in 2009, returned home, and supervised an after-school program for at-risk youths at Hayes/Porter School in Cincinnati.

Kaia joined the Springdale Police Department on August 22, 2012. Colonel Thomas Wells, while he was the assistant chief, interviewed Kaia and was impressed immediately. “She was kind of one of those people that you knew when you met her, this is somebody we need. This is somebody who is going to make a difference in our community.”

She graduated from the Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy December 21, 2012. Springdale Lieutenant Lynn McKee (Retired), who followed her through her field training experience and worked with her sporadically thereafter, said that from the beginning it was obvious that she was going to be special. “She was very physically fit, always had a smile on her face, and always did more than she had to.” Officers from neighboring municipalities and townships had similar opinions of her.

MURDERER

Terry Blankenship (42) was born about 1978. He had been charged in Clinton and Clermont Counties four times with Domestic Violence and once with Assault. Twice he was permitted to plea

to Disorderly Conduct and the other three were dismissed. He and his wife, Krista Blankenship, separated in October 2019.

On Thursday, March 19, 2020, about 8 p.m., Blankenship broke into Mrs. Blankenship's trailer at the Blanchester Mobile Home Park, 800 East Center Street. Her boyfriend, Kenneth Jordan, was in the rear bedroom on the phone with police communications. Blankenship expressed to Mrs. Blankenship that he intended to kill Jordan and went to the bedroom and pointed a pistol at his face. Jordan grabbed the gun and they fought over it before Blankenship gained control of it and pistol-whipped him.

Blankenship fled the trailer before police arrived and, on the way out, threatened to commit suicide by cop. Clermont County Sheriff's Office personnel contacted the Loveland and Elmwood Place Police Departments advising them to be on the lookout for Blankenship, wanted for Aggravated Burglary, armed and dangerous, and threatening "suicide by cop." They had an address where he might be staying in Elmwood Place and another where he might be working in Loveland.

INCIDENT

Forty-eight hours later, at 8:05 p.m. on March 21, 2020, Elmwood Police found Blankenship driving his maroon pickup truck and attempted to pull him over. Blankenship took off and they pursued him.

The pursuit went up Paddock Road to Interstate 75 to Interstate 275 and westbound from there. The pursuit entered the corporate limits of the City of Springdale. Officer Grant was preparing to or had already thrown out a Stop Stick, a tire-deflation device, between Route 4 and the Winton/S. Gilmore Roads exit

when 30-year-veteran Sergeant Andrew Davis pulled up and got out of his car to assist.

Suddenly, Blankenship was coming through, but then he swerved his truck toward the officers. Officer Grant probably ran for cover behind her vehicle and perhaps on the other side of the crash barrier. She never made it. At 8:16 p.m. Blankenship slammed into Officer Grant and her patrol car with such force that it caused her "to go airborne and cross the highway barrier and land on the opposite side of the highway." She was gravely injured.

Sergeant Davis, also seeking cover, was struck by flying vehicle parts and injured.

Blankenship's truck came to rest on the right side of the highway. Officer Grant's body worn camera then recorded a single gunshot was heard. "Blankenship had extensive facial injuries as the result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. A loaded .45 caliber semi-automatic was found in Blankenship's truck."

Air Care responded to fly Officer Grant to the University Hospital Medical Center in Clifton. Sergeant Davis was transported by ambulance to University Hospital of West Chester. Blankenship was transported to Bethesda North Hospital.

Blankenship's injuries were such that he required a higher level of care than Bethesda could provide. He was flown by Air Care from Bethesda Hospital to University Hospital where emergency surgery was performed.

Sergeant Davis was treated at and released from University Hospital of West Chester. He immediately returned to the Springdale Police Department to assist in the investigation. Days later, he returned to work.



DEATH

Officer Grant was pronounced dead upon arrival at University Hospital. Her remains were escorted to the Thompson, Hall, and Jordan Funeral Home in Forest Park on Sunday, March 22, 2020. They have been formally guarded, around the clock, by the Hamilton County Police Association Honor Guard since her death.

Officer Grant is survived by her parents, Gena R. Mobley and Kevin (Lekesha) Grant; son Riley; grandparents, Joyce Mobley and Leon Brooks; dearest friend, Joe Haugh; and brothers, Kellen Grant, Kendell Grant (Ysabel), Brandan (Latasha) Foster, Charles Johnson, Dylan Johnson, Demetrix Johnson, and Ronald Smith.

A funeral was held on Sunday, March 29, 2020, beginning at 9 a.m. Due to the CODIV-19 Pandemic, agencies from a longer distance could not travel to Cincinnati. Regardless, hundreds of marked police and fire vehicles from around the tri-state left the Spring Grove Funeral Home in a cortege escorting Officer Grant’s remains to Springdale, through her hometown of Wyoming. The procession was covered live by WLW-TV, WKRC-TV, and WXIX. More than a thousand citizens lined the 20-mile route

from Spring Grove to the church. The route passed by her alma mater, Wyoming High School, and the Springdale Police and Fire Department buildings.

A service was held at the Vineyard Church. The final vehicles arrived at the church more than an hour after the first. Again, due to the pandemic, only the family and Springdale Police personnel were permitted inside. The services were live streamed on the Internet by the church. Outside, officers stood in formation and filled the church's large parking lots.

Donations may be made at all 5th/3rd bank locations for the "Kaia L. Grant Memorial Scholarship Fund".

JUSTICE

Less than two weeks after the murder, Blankenship was transferred to a nursing home for continued medical care.

Hamilton County Prosecutor Joseph T. Deters met with Ohio Attorney General David Yost and BCI Special Agents Rick Ward and Seth Hagaman on Wednesday, April 8, 2020 and decided to sign charges of Aggravated Murder (with a death specification).

Blankenship was transported from the nursing home, wearing officer Grant's handcuffs, to the Hamilton County Justice Center on April 20, 2020 and to the Courthouse on April 21, 2020 for arraignment. After a plea of Not Guilty, he was returned to jail without a bond. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the grand jury did not hear the case until May 29, 2020, at which time he was indicted for ten counts, including Aggravated Murder of a Police Officer with a death penalty specification.

On April 30, 2021, Blankenship plead to Aggravated Murder in a

plea deal that would send him to prison for thirty years to life. He is currently imprisoned in the Madison Correctional Institute with a parole hearing scheduled in January 2050, at which time he will be 72. By January 2026, he was moved to the Belmont Correctional Institute in St. Clairsville, Ohio.

If you know of any information, archives, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

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