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Two detectives talk before approaching people standing outside a home in the 1800 block of South 48th Court on Jan. 3, 2024, in Cicero. Two women were fatally shot at the location Tuesday night. (John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune)

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The slaying of two young mothers shot in a Cicero home Tuesday night, followed by the apparent suicide of the gunman, took a turn Wednesday morning when a baby first reported to be unharmed in the shooting was admitted to a Chicago hospital with serious wounds.

Police said they found Myeshia Newby, 19, and Jessica Hughes, 29, fatally wounded while responding to a home in the 1800 block of South 48th Court around 7:45 p.m. Tuesday.

Police believe Newby and Hughes were shot by Rafael Vega, 21, Cicero police Superintendent Thomas Boyle said at a news conference Wednesday evening. Newby and Vega shared a 10-month-old son, the infant wounded in the shooting, a family member told the Tribune. Police confirmed the two had a “romantic relationship.”

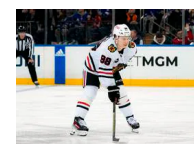
The 10-month-old boy’s grandmother first told police Tuesday night the baby was not injured, but sought medical help Wednesday morning as the infant’s behavior changed, Boyle said.

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The condition of the child, who suffered a gunshot wound, had stabilized Wednesday afternoon, Boyle added. A spokesperson for the Chicago Fire Department, which transported the child to Comer Children’s Hospital, said earlier Wednesday the child was in critical condition.

Cicero police found Vega dead in a park near 18th Street and 56th Court early Wednesday and have identified him as a suspect in the deaths of Newby and Hughes, Boyle said. Vega had previously been charged with two counts of aggressive unlawful use of a loaded weapon, as well as one count of possessing a stolen firearm, according to court records.



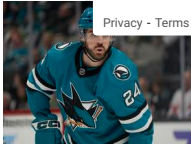
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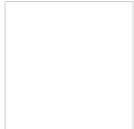
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Police are investigating separately the infant's gunshot wounds, the deaths of Hughes and Newby and the discovery of Vega's body, but believe the deaths and injuries are all connected, Boyle said.

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"From all appearances, they appear to be related," Boyle said.

Fourteen people were in the house when the two women and baby were shot, Boyle said. Mitchell Benton, father of Hughes and great-grandfather of Newby, was among them, the 75-year-old told the Tribune.



Afternoon Briefing

Weekdays

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Benton was doing laundry in the home's basement when he heard Newby and Vega talking about Link cards in an adjoining room, he said. As Hughes looked on, Newby asked to borrow Vega's card to get milk and supplies for their child, Benton said. A debate ensued when Vega said he didn't have the card, Benton added.

Benton then heard five or six gunshots. After the shooting, Hughes tried to flee with the wounded infant, Benton said.

"By the time I went through the door, my daughter fell on my feet, and she was holding the baby," he said.

Benton then grabbed ahold of Vega. As the two fought, an ammunition clip fell to the floor, Benton said. The fight moved outside, where Benton threw Vega through the backyard fence, and Vega fled on foot, Benton said.

"By then I couldn't breathe," Benton said. "I'm 75 years old. It was getting to me."

Newby and Hughes were later taken to Mount Sinai Hospital, where they were later pronounced dead, police said.

Both women lived on the block where the shooting took place, records show. The two appeared to be close, regularly interacting on social media.