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Santa Ana detectives and officers investigate the scene where an armed man was shot Sunday afternoon by Santa Ana police at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Santa Ana, Calif., Sunday, March 1, 2020. Santa Ana police officers fatally shot an armed man Sunday afternoon inside the Catholic church, the Orange County Register reported. (AP/The Orange County Register/Leonard Ortiz)

by The Associated Press

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Santa Ana, Calif. — March 2, 2020

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Santa Ana police officers fatally shot an armed man Mar. 1 afternoon inside a Catholic church, [the Orange County Register reported](#).

The shooting at the altar took place shortly after the officers were flagged down at 4:20 p.m. and told someone inside Immaculate Heart of Mary Church had a gun, police Cpl. Anthony Bertagna said.

The officers found the man with a gun inside the church, and then the shooting took place shortly thereafter, Bertagna said.

The man ran outside with the gun and collapsed on a nearby street, Bertagna said. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

"We understand he was distraught over a relationship," Bertagna told the Register. "We're not sure if that's why he was here."

Police Chief David Valentin said witnesses reported the man was distraught and possibly suicidal; and it didn't appear he was planning a mass shooting.

"It's tragic, it really is. Any loss of life, it's tragic. In this circumstance, it's a place of worship," Valentin said. "People come here for comfort, spiritual healing, support, so for this to happen here it's traumatic for everyone involved,"

Officers were told by people inside the church, who had arrived for a 5 p.m. service, that another person may have been with the suspect. Officers searched the church and a nearby school, but by early Mar. 1 evening had not yet found another suspect, Bertagna told the Register.

Police withheld the suspect's name pending notification of family.

Maria Roque, 39 of Santa Ana, a member of the church, told the Register that she, like the others, was surprised to find out a shooting occurred. Friends were in the library inside the church when the shooting took place, but they were all safe, she

said.

"It's scary to think we're not even safe here," Roque said. "I've been coming here since I was 16 years old."

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