

FBI says suspects opened fire first

One man ordered the others to start shooting, documents say. Two witnesses to the Broad Street shootout disagree.

By Shankar Vedantam
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

The North Broad shootout that left one man dead and four others wounded began when a 19-year-old suspect instructed his three companions to open fire as FBI agents approached their car, the FBI stated yesterday in charges filed in U.S. District Court.

The FBI charged Melvin Williams, 19, and Termaine Jackson, 20, with forcibly assaulting federal agents, carrying firearms and resisting arrest. The third suspect left alive after Wednesday's shootout, Wayne Caldwell, was not charged.

In a court affidavit, the bureau stated that Caldwell told them Williams ordered the other three to kill the agents moments before the shooting erupted. The FBI said that its agents were fired upon first and that they clearly identified themselves as they approached the car.

Meanwhile, a second eyewitness contested the FBI's version of events, saying the agents fired first, without provocation.

Althea Williams, of the 1800 block of Brunner Street and a friend of the slain suspect's family, said agents had surrounded the car and opened fire.

"They started shooting," said Williams, who said she was getting a check cashed at the time at a store just yards from the site of the shooting.

"And they knew what they were going to do because they all came together . . . all of the team. If the FBI had showed their ID, no one was going to run — they're so powerful."

The FBI said Melvin Williams has denied firing at officers or calling on the others to shoot. The bureau says Williams told them he had a .38-caliber pistol at the time of the gunfight but did not use it.

Williams appeared twice in court yesterday. About 3 p.m., he was brought in to face U.S. Magistrate Judge Richard Powers Jr. But Williams

See SHOOTOUT on B8

Clipped By:



jerrwilliamsauthor
Tue, Apr 9, 2019