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One soldier killed, two injured in shooting on Fort Bragg

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Army investigators work the scene of a fatal shooting Thursday. A soldier with the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade was shot and killed during a safety briefing.

A Fort Bragg soldier shot and killed another soldier during a unit safety briefing on post Thursday afternoon, then shot and wounded himself, officials said.

Both soldiers were assigned to the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade. A third soldier in the unit suffered a minor injury.

None of the soldiers' identities have been released by Fort Bragg authorities.

The shooting happened around 3:30 p.m. during a briefing ahead of the long weekend for soldiers, officials said. It is unclear how many shots were fired.

Fort Bragg spokesman Col. Kevin Arata said he did not know the specific nature of the injuries of the two surviving soldiers, but said the shooter was alive and in custody.

A senior U.S. defense official told NBC News that the soldier killed was a battalion commander. Arata wouldn't confirm the report but did say the brigade's commander was not harmed.

"This is a tragedy for our community. We don't yet know the reasons for the shooting, but are working with the unit and the affected families to help them through this difficult period," Arata said. "Our prayers are with those who have been affected by this terrible incident."

The killing is believed to be the first shooting murder on Fort Bragg in more than 15 years, when Sgt. William J. Kreutzer Jr. opened fire on his brigade at Towle Stadium. But the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade lost another soldier about three months ago when he was shot and killed in Fayetteville.

Thursday's shooting was in a field next to the Bastogne Gables neighborhood on Fort Bragg. The area is in Fort Bragg's historic district, several blocks from Macomb Street.

The field, often used for formations by nearby units, is flanked by buildings used by the 525th and the 16th Military Police Brigade.

Hours after the shooting, military police and agents from Army Criminal Investigation Command remained on the scene, which centered on the area around a small wooden stage.

Nearby intersections in the area of Letterman and Armistead streets remained blocked Thursday evening.

The 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade has several subordinate battalions, including the 319th Military Intelligence Battalion, the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion, the 1st Squadron of the 38th Cavalry Regiment and the 525 Brigade Support Battalion.

Safety briefings are common on Fort Bragg and typically take place before weekends or holidays to remind soldiers to be safe and use caution.

Fort Bragg soldiers have a training holiday today and do not report back for duty until Tuesday.

It is unclear what, if anything, was the motive for the attack.

The Army has been confronting a surge of suicides within the military, officials have said.

Pentagon statistics obtained by The Associated Press show that suicides have spiked this year to roughly one a day, higher than the rate of combat deaths. About half of those turning weapons on themselves have no history of deployment.

Thursday's killing came three months after the murder of Sgt. Kevin Moseby in Fayetteville. Moseby, who had been with the Special Troops Battalion, 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade since January 2010, was shot at his home in March.

Another soldier, Duane Brown Jr. of Sanford, was charged in that killing.

While several non-shooting murders have occurred on Fort Bragg in recent years, officials said it is very rare to have a soldier shot and killed on the military installation.

In October 1995, Kreutzer shot and killed Maj. Stephen Mark Badger and wounded 18 other soldiers. Kreutzer is serving a life sentence at a military prison in Kansas.