

## Cop killed woman, lit her on fire after 'romantic encounter': police

Sasha Goldstein

nydailynews.com

[2014 Cop murder of female encounter from back page.com Tahreem Zeus Rana](#)



*Police Handout Tahreem Zeus Rana, 23, had been on the Atlanta police force since 2011 and had a clean disciplinary file.*

An Atlanta police officer was busted trying to skip town Thursday, nearly one week after he kidnapped a woman he met online, took her to a secluded suburban area, shot her and then set her dead body on fire, police said.

Tahreem Zeus Rana, 23, was caught around 8:30 a.m. Thursday after he tried to board a flight to Monterey, Mexico, possibly en route to India, WSB-TV reported.

The murder suspect was on the no-fly list, cops said, and has since been fired.

"We are shocked and saddened by these developments," the department said of the three-year veteran. "The officer has been relieved from duty, and is in a non-enforcement status."

Vernicia Woodard, 26, was killed sometime last Friday after meeting up with Rana, police said.

Rana allegedly used his service weapon to kill the woman, cops said.

Rana met 26-year-old Vernicia Woodard on Backpage.com for a "romantic exchange" in Rana's hometown of Hapeville, a southern Atlanta suburb, police there said. He took the woman to a rural part of the town, shot her several times, then lit her on fire, police said.

A city worker found the burning body on Elm Street the morning of Aug. 22, the news station reported.

"He took her to a secluded area to do the crime and then, after killing her, used some kind of fuel to light her body on fire," Hapeville police Detective Stephen Cushing told the station.

Police believe he used his service weapon to kill the Woodard, mother to an 8-year-old. He became the prime suspect after the woman's phone records led investigators to Backpage.com and eventually Rana, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

A "wanted" poster featuring Rana's picture was released to the public Wednesday.

The murder comes as a shock to Hapeville police officers, who recalled watching Rana grow up in the community. He had a clean disciplinary file.



**WANTED**

MURDER MURDER MURDER MURDER MURDER  
TAHREEM ZEUS RANA



DESCRIPTION

Date of Birth:	11/30/90	Place of Birth:	Unknown
Height:	5'10"	Eyes:	Brown
Weight:	185	Complexion:	Olive
Hair:	Black	Build:	Medium Build
Sex:	M	Race:	N-White, Non-Hisp
Occupation:	Unknown	Ethnicity:	
Scars and Marks:			

CAUTION

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Hapeville Police Department 404 768 7171

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS PERSON, PLEASE CONTACT  
YOUR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY OR DIAL 911

*CBS46 Rana was arrested trying to flee the country Thursday morning. He was considered the prime suspect as of Wednesday.*

*Hapeville police considered Rana, who grew up in the town, a suspect as of Wednesday.*

"I've been a police officer in city of Hapeville for 15 years and actually saw this young man grow up and heard him say, "When I grow up, I want to be a police officer," Det. Cushing told the station.

Rana faces charges of murder, arson, kidnapping and tampering with evidence. He's next due in court Sept. 12.

"Being someone who works in law enforcement ... it hurts a lot more to know that it was somebody in law enforcement," Woodard's sister, Tashara Gilyard, told WSB as she held back tears.

*sgoldstein@nydailynews.com*