

Public Safety

Police arrest District worker who they say pulled shotgun during dispute

By **Peter Hermann** February 10 at 7:31 AM

A worker at the District's wastewater treatment plant in Southwest Washington was arrested Friday after, police said, he took out a shotgun during an argument over a parking space at the facility in Blue Plains.

Police said the man did not point the loaded weapon at anybody, but the incident forced the treatment plant and the headquarters for D.C. Water, located on the same property, into a 24-minute lockdown. The agency is in the 5000 block of Overlook Avenue SW, across from the D.C. police training academy.

George Thomas Johnson, 65, was charged with five firearms offenses, including possession of a prohibited weapon and possession of ammunition. He was freed from custody pending a hearing in D.C. Superior Court scheduled for March 3. Johnson's attorney, David B. Benowitz, said his client denies the allegations.

A spokesman for D.C. Water, John Lisle, confirmed that Johnson is a worker at the plant. Lisle said he has been placed on administrative leave with pay, pending an internal investigation.

Until last year, Johnson served for more than a decade as executive director of a major regional labor union, District Council 20 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, making him a powerful player in D.C. politics.

An arrest affidavit says police were called to the plant about 10:20 a.m. Two men told officers that Johnson boxed in their truck with his SUV and refused to move. Police said Johnson got out of his SUV with a baton, prompting one of the men to threaten to beat him.

“I have something better,” Johnson told the men, according to the court affidavit. Police said he pulled a sawed-off shotgun out of his vehicle. Police said the Wards Western Field Deluxe gun was loaded with six shells, though none were in the chamber.

“We look forward to litigating in court,” Benowitz said.

Mike DeBonis contributed to this report.