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Threats to governor investigated

By **Hillary Borrud**
 The Oregonian/OregonLive

PORTLAND (AP) — The Saturday before Thanksgiving 2015, two men showed up unannounced at Gov. Kate Brown's bungalow in southeast Portland.

Nolan Scott Ashby, a rug cleaner from Milwaukie, and Darrell Lynn Snook Sr., a homeless man, had wanted to talk to the governor about homeless veterans' issues. They were disappointed but cooperative when a member of Brown's security detail told them she was unavailable.

"I saw her go in the house," Nolan told *The Oregonian/OregonLive* this week. "We saw her pull up right before we got there."

Though the impromptu visit to Brown's private residence ended without incident, Oregon State Police would open an investigation three weeks later. That's when troopers were notified that

Ashby had "intended to blow up the home," documents show.

The encounter was one of six perceived threat investigations opened since Brown took office in February 2015. By comparison, there were eight in the preceding 12 years of her two predecessors, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Gov. John Kitzhaber.

In evaluating hostility toward a governor, state police have to differentiate between protected political speech and potentially criminal behavior. Troopers also have to contend with individuals struggling with mental illness.

The Oregonian/OregonLive requested information about threat investigations tied to the last three governors in an effort to learn more about the frequency and seriousness of such incidents. In May, the Oregon Court of

Appeals ruled that Tyrone Waters should not have been committed to psychiatric care for six months for the June 2015 death threat he made against Brown. Waters has schizophrenia and his mother — former state Sen. Avel Gordly — has spoken publicly of his struggles.

Records and other information released by state police showed more anecdotal accounts of threat assessments than actual files opened.

In half the recorded cases involving Brown, the individuals exhibiting hostility toward the governor had documented histories of mental illness. One man was in the custody of Oregon State Hospital; two others were inmates at an Eastern Oregon prison.

A special unit of the Oregon State Police protects the governor.

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