

No Ramsey special prosecutor

By Judith Kohler
The Associated Press

DENVER — Gov. Bill Owens said Wednesday he has decided not to appoint a special prosecutor to look into the JonBenet Ramsey slaying, saying police are working with new evidence and headed in the right direction.

Owens also had strong words for the little girl's parents, John and Patsy Ramsey, asking them to "stop hiding behind their attorneys" and return to Colorado to help authorities solve the case.

"To the killers, let me say this: You only think you have gotten away with murder. There is strong evidence to suggest who you are," Owens said. "I think investigators are moving closer to proving their case. They will keep pursuing you. You will reap what you have sown."

The Ramseys, who moved to the Atlanta area after the killing, have insisted they are innocent.

Denver legal analyst Andrew Cohen said the governor's references to the killers was the strongest accusation yet against the Ramseys. He called it a "cheap shot."

"I don't think anyone, even a governor, should be allowed to accuse people of doing some-

thing, which they have a constitutional right to do, which is hide behind their lawyers," Cohen said.

Two weeks ago, a Boulder County grand jury completed a 13-month investigation of the 1996 slaying without issuing any indictments. District Attorney Alex Hunter said there was not enough evidence to charge anyone, although he and police said the Ramseys remain under suspicion.

Owens also asked a seven-member task force to recommend whether a special prosecutor should be appointed. The group was made up of a former Colorado Supreme Court chief justice; Owens' chief legal counsel; a deputy attorney general and four district attorneys.

On Tuesday, Owens said he had decided that investigators were on the right track and were analyzing "substantial new evidence."

Owens acknowledged that initial mistakes harmed the probe. Critics have claimed the investigation was compromised when detectives allowed the Ramseys and friends to roam through their mansion in Boulder.

"The conduct of the initial

Ramsey investigation was far from perfect," Owens acknowledged. "There can be little doubt that the Ramsey case will be harder to prove in court because of the initial mistakes."

He added: "The killers in the case made some very serious mistakes, but they're also very smart. They have stonewalled very effectively and they have covered their tracks well."

Early on Dec. 26, 1996, Patsy Ramsey told police she found a ransom note demanding \$118,000 for her daughter's safe return. Eight hours later, JonBenet's father said he found his daughter's body in the basement.

The governor declined comment on whether the Ramseys had a role in their daughter's death.

"If I could speak to John and Patsy Ramsey," he said, "I would tell them to quit hiding behind their attorneys, come back to Colorado and work with investigators in this case, no matter where that trail will lead."

Hal Haddon, the Ramseys' Boulder-based attorney, was in a conference and not available for comment.

Caviar crackdown lands importers in court

By Tom Hays
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — It's a multimillion-dollar plot stretching from Eastern Europe to the United States. Another Russian money laundering scandal? A heroin ring?

No, it's caviar — thousands of pounds of Russian sturgeon roe allegedly smuggled in suitcases, bound for New York City's gourmet stores.

Two businessmen are on trial in Brooklyn federal court in a case that highlights an international endangered-species law and the lucrative black market for the world's finest fish eggs.

Eugeniusz Koczuk, the 48-year-old owner of an import company called Gino International, and his associate Wieslaw Rozbicki, 37, are the first people to be prosecuted under new provisions in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. They could get five years in prison and be forced to forfeit \$2 million if convicted.

Prosecutors say the caviar the men imported was a protected wildlife product that should have been declared to the proper agencies.

Defense attorneys call the case overkill and say their clients are honest importers caught in a complex regulatory web. Rozbicki is "bewildered and feeling quite overwhelmed by all of this," said his lawyer, Roger Adler.

Under provisions of the endangered species agreement, which involves the United States and 142 other countries, three types of Caspian Sea sturgeon were added to a list of threatened animals.

For centuries, the sturgeons' eggs have been harvested to produce prized beluga caviar, as well as lower-grade sevruga and osetra caviar.

Since last April, anyone carrying more than a half-pound of caviar into the United States must produce permits showing it was legally harvested. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also has begun DNA-testing caviar shipments to make sure they really contain the premium varieties like beluga, which retails for about \$80 an ounce in the United States.

The regulations are aimed reversing a 70 percent drop in the population of Caspian Sea sturgeon over the last 20 years.

Before the rules went into effect

last year, the Fish and Wildlife Service held a seminar for importers and retailers. Koczuk and Rozbicki, who worked out of Koczuk's Connecticut home, signed up.

But investigators say they ignored the restrictions and instead paid off-duty Polish airline employees \$500 each to smuggle tins of Caspian caviar in their luggage on flights from Poland to New York.

Records show the company sold 19,000 pounds of caviar for millions of dollars between April and November of 1998. During that period, the defendants received permission to import only 88 pounds, prosecutors said.

Monroe's dresses up for auction

By Karen Matthews
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Thirty-seven years after her death, Marilyn Monroe grabbed the spotlight again Wednesday at an auction featuring her furs, hundreds of books and the form-fitting, flesh-colored dress she wore to serenade President Kennedy in 1962.

The dress, so tight she had to be sewn into it and made of silk soufflé gauze and covered with 6,000 rhinestone beads and sequins, was expected to draw the most spirited bidding; it originally cost \$12,000. Monroe wore it during her breathless rendition of "Happy Birthday" to JFK at Madison Square Garden.

Christie's senior vice president Nancy Valentino billed the two-day sale as "possibly the last and most lavish celebrity auction of

the millennium."

Several other Monroe dresses — including a racy scarlet halter dress, an ivory crepe evening sheath worn to the premiere of "Some Like It Hot," and a black sequined dress believed to have been worn to entertain U.S. soldiers in Korea in 1954 — were expected to fetch between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

Christie's had estimated the JFK dress would fetch a price in the "high six-figure" range.

Other items to be auctioned, most of them in storage for nearly four decades, included a diamond-encrusted platinum eternity ring from Joe DiMaggio that was expected to bring more than \$30,000, and 400 books from her private library.

They also include mementos from her marriages.

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