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Christian Longo may face death

By Hugh McDiarmid Jr.
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

Christian Longo discarded a potentially life-saving trump card when he agreed to return to the United States from Mexico without a fight.

Instead, he faces the possibility of execution by lethal injection in Oregon, where he had his first court proceeding Wednesday in the deaths of his wife and three children.

Longo asked for a court-appointed attorney during the proceeding, where he spoke via video link from the jail in Lincoln County. He is being held in lieu of a \$2.5-million bond.

Prosecutors will present evidence to a grand jury sometime next week. That panel will determine if Longo will stand trial on charges he killed his wife, Maryjane Longo, 34, and children Zachary, 4, Sadie, 3, and Madison, 2. Their bodies were recovered from Pacific Ocean inlets last month.

Longo's attorney, Kenneth Hadley, said he anticipates Longo will plead not guilty at his next court appearance Jan. 23.

District Attorney Bernice Barnett will not say whether she will seek the death penalty for Longo, who lived in Ypsilanti until falling into debt and moving to Toledo and then Oregon last year. If convicted of the slayings, he could be the state's 26th inmate waiting execution.

"As an elected official, there has to be a lot of pressure to do that," said Mike Ford, a Eugene, Ore., defense attorney who has handled six death penalty defenses.

Longo would still be in Mexico had he decided to fight extradition rather than voluntarily return with FBI agents who tracked him down in the resort town of Tulum on Sunday. The extradition process could have taken months or even years.

What's more, Mexican officials might have refused to return him if it was clear that Longo would face

the death penalty. "Mexico does not extradite if the penalty they will face is the death penalty," said Miguel Monterrubio, press secretary with the Mexican Embassy in Washington D.C. "Our constitution forbids it."

Oregon attorney Kevin Hunt said Longo's lawyers may still be able to argue that his voluntary return to the United States was coerced or illegal if it can be proved he was never informed of his right to contact the U.S. Consulate in Mexico.

The prospect of a high-profile Oregon murder trial will add fuel to the debate over repealing the state's death penalty law — a measure which is expected to land on November's ballot.

"The timing of this case is going to have to be dealt with by proponents of the initiative," Hunt said. "It's bad timing for them."

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News briefs

Students meet ASUO senators

An estimated 25 students and senators mingled at a "Meet the Senators" function Wednesday night hosted by the ASUO Student Senate. The function allowed students interested in running for senate a chance to meet current members and learn about the student political system at the University.

"I came tonight because I was interested in joining the senate. I was not really involved in government during high school, and I thought this would give me a chance to express my opinion and have a voice," freshman Persis Pohowalla said.

Sophomore Megan Hughes said

she came because, "I believe that it is important to know what the senate is doing because they control student funding issues."

Following the function, the senate conducted their weekly meeting and unanimously appointed Rebecca Lynn Reynolds to an empty senate seat. Senate President Peter Watts said Reynolds will be an asset to the senate because she deeply cares about people and has been active in many student groups.

"I have had a lot of experience working on committees with people, and I really look forward to working with the senate in these conferences," Reynolds said.

In other business, the senate approved a request to transfer \$113 from surplus funds to the Interna-

tional Student Association to help pay for a phone line cancellation. ISA received a double line from the phone company, and after canceling one line, it was still required to pay for the line.

In addition, the ASUO Executive decided to co-sponsor a guest speaker for a new student group just recognized by the University as an organization in fall 2001. The group allows students to explore functional linguistics and phrenology, which is the study of analyzing character. The group could not receive the requested \$300 in student government funding until next year because they organized after the distribution of funds for this academic year.

— Danielle Gillespie

Communication

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direct relation with Pakistan," he said. "Pakistan and India are one culture, one language — and for the new generation, the conflict concerning Kashmir is becoming trivial. Personally, I feel we all get along."

Tyagi compared the Dec. 13 attack in India to the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States.

"It does not matter if thousands of people are killed from a terrorist attack or just one. It was still a terrorist attack, and it demonstrates that every country has terrorists," Tyagi said.

Sophomore Gibran Azamali said that he, too, believes Pakistan

and India will not go to war, and he does not see a problem with the Bush administration's peace efforts. He said a mediator between Pakistan and India would help the countries resolve the conflict more quickly. However, Azamali said dividing Kashmir's land between the two countries would not be a viable option.

"I think that the only solution is if neither India nor Pakistan get Kashmir," Azamali said. "Both countries have origins there, and no one could say that Kashmir should belong to one country over the other."

Senior Haseena Vaswani said the conflict between Pakistan and India is at the political level and is not a part of an average Pakistanis' or Indian's daily life. Tyagi and Azamali agreed and said the

average citizens in Pakistan and India have good relations with one another.

"It is something they see on the news, but nothing that affects them in their daily lives," Azamali said.

Azamali traveled to Pakistan during winter break to visit family, while Vaswani visited India. Both said life was normal in their countries.

"I went to Delhi; nothing to me seemed to be changed from any of the other times I had visited," Vaswani said. "My flight was delayed because of the attack, but other than that things were like usual."

Tyagi said he believes that the union of Pakistanis and Indians in one organization, SIS, at the University is just one example that camaraderie does exist between the two countries. SIS began at the University in 1999 to promote cultural, economic and social awareness about the countries in the Indian Subcontinent.

"We work together. Culturally we all have the same root. The countries are different, but it does not stop us from getting along with each other," Tyagi said.

E-mail reporter Danielle Gillespie at daniellegillespie@dailyemerald.com.

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