

THIS MODERN WORLD



news Briefs

TASER WITNESSES WANT CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

Three witnesses to the May 30 Taser of anti-pesticide activist and UO student Ian Van Ornum have submitted a formal request for a criminal investigation into whether the use of force by Eugene police officers "constitutes the crimes of assault, harassment and other crimes."

The criminal complaint alleges that Van Ornum was physically injured and suffered a concussion due to the unjustified police use of force, which has caused him "possibly protracted impairment of health."

WAR DEAD

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003

- (last week's numbers in parentheses):
- 4,114 U.S. troops killed* (4,113)
- 29,978 U.S. troops injured* (29,978)
- 145 U.S. military suicides* (145)
- 314 coalition troops killed** (313)
- 1,123 contractors killed (accurate updates NA)
- 93,585 to one million Iraqi civilians killed*** (92,871)
- \$534.7 billion cost of war (\$532.7 billion)
- \$152.1 million cost to Eugene taxpayers (\$151.5 million)

* through July 7, 2008; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly ** estimate; source: icasualties.org *** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 to one million.

The complaint letter against EPD officers Jud Warden and Bill Solesbee was drafted with the assistance of local attorney Brian Michaels and sent to Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers, Lane County District Attorney Douglas Harclerod, Mayor Kitty Piercy, Police Auditor Cristina Beamud and EPD Internal Affairs Sgt. Scott McKee. The witnesses are Samantha Chirillo, Josh Schlossberg and Amy Pincus Merwin.

The complainants specifically request the investigation be conducted by someone outside the EPD and district attorney's offices, citing actions and statements by the police and DA that "reveal their bias towards the officers and reflect an inability to be fair and impartial."

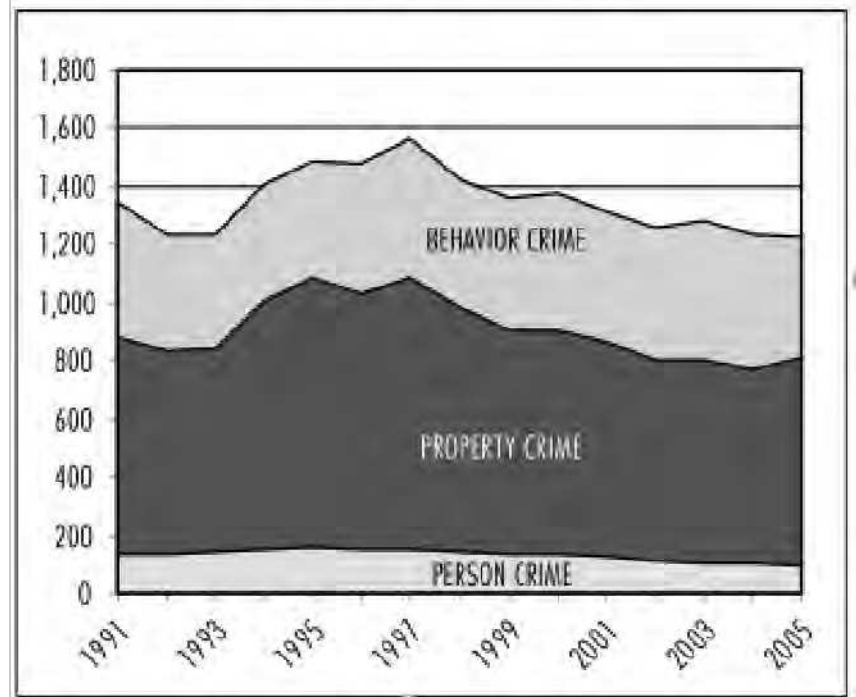
Harclerod and McKee have come under fire lately for McKee's dual role as an investigator both for the grand jury inquiry into possibly felony charges against Van Ornum and other protesters, as well as working as an Internal Affairs officer investigating complaints against the police.

The three witnesses allege that their complaint is based on four main points drawn from the officers' own official reports: The officers dragged Van Ornum by his hair and used a "hair hold take down," which has a "high potential to inflict serious physical injury to the subject's neck and spine." Officer Warden used his Taser on Van Ornum while he was already prone on the ground and according to the reports, his resistance was "active but not combative." There were two other officers nearby who could have assisted Warden and Solesbee if they needed help restraining Van Ornum. Deploying a Taser, alleges the letter of complaint, "under the totality of circumstances, constituted an unjustified use of force."

Witness Schlossberg has previously said it was "800 pounds of cop versus 150 pounds of hippie."

Finally, the complaint says the Taser was deployed again while Van Ornum was on the ground with his right, handcuffed

LANE COUNTY CRIME REPORT RATE PER 10,000 POPULATION BY TYPE OF CRIME 1991-2005



COUNTY CRIME DROPPED

Lane County has been complaining that it must drastically increase the number of beds in its jail for more than a decade, lately arguing that it needs a ten fold increase to 1,500 beds.

But while so many criminals were supposedly running free, the crime rate in Lane County has been falling, not increasing, according to a Regional Trends report released last month by the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG). The report shows person, property and behavior crime rates all fell between 1991 and 2005 (see chart). From 1997 to 2005, crime rates fell substantially during the time the county was complaining loudly that a lack of jail and law enforcement funding was making the county unsafe.

Adding unneeded jail beds could be a costly mistake for taxpayers. Each jail bed can cost more than \$30,000 a year to operate and more than \$100,000 to build.

- Alan Pittman

EUGENE SOLDIER'S COURT MARTIAL LOOMS CLOSER

Eugene soldier James Burmeister (EW 5/22) faces a special court martial on July 16 at Ft. Knox, Ky., for desertion from fighting in Iraq. Burmeister's assignments included participating in "bait and kill teams." The teams lured Iraqis often unarmed and sometimes Iraqi children out to be shot. Burmeister said he was unable to bring himself to continue to participate in what he saw as war crimes and went AWOL.



For leaving the military, Burmeister said he is threatened with prison, dishonorable discharge and loss of veterans' benefits for his post-traumatic stress disorder and for the effects of a brain injury from a roadside bomb.

Jack Dresser and Gordon Sturrock of Veterans For Peace and Squadron13.com posted a video statement on YouTube on July 4 in support of Burmeister. They chose to speak out rather than observe the traditional fireworks, they said. "As Veterans for Peace we reject these simulations of war, which should not be used to celebrate or represent our country."

Burmeister discussed the "bait and kill teams" with the CBC news in Canada months before their existence was confirmed in a September 2007 Washington Post story. Dresser and Sturrock say, "As a whistleblower, Burmeister deserves our gratitude and support in restoring the rule of law to our country."

Burmeister's attorney has requested a discharge in lieu of a court martial, and his supporters hope that media and public attention to the case will persuade the Army to give Burmeister the discharge.

They are asking people to call the Fort Knox Public Affairs Office (502) 624-7451 and request that Burmeister be released immediately, and write or call Peter DeFazio, asking him to show that he supports fair treatment for all soldiers: Congressman Peter DeFazio, 405 East 8th Avenue, #2030, Eugene, Oregon 97401; 465-6732.

- Camilla Mortensen