

Police Shooting Leads to \$500,000 Settlement

For man shot in back and left dying

The City of Portland has agreed to pay a \$500,000 settlement to the family of a man killed by a police sniper in 2005. Raymond Gwerder was suicidal and had threatened to shoot police if they came inside his northeast Portland home. He was shot in the back outside the home while he was on the phone with a police negotiator, ending a 90-minute standoff.

The police sniper told investigators he saw the 30-year-old Gwerder appear to aim his gun as if he was "hunting" for something to shoot.

The officer said he feared that if Gwerder went inside the triplex house, he'd harm a mother and her two children in an adjoining unit.

A Multnomah County grand jury reviewed the shooting and found no criminal wrongdoing.

Attorney Tom Steenson, who represented Gwerder's estate, announced the settlement in a news release.

"It was a flawed police operation," Steenson said. "He was shot in the back at the same time he was cooperating with police."

Steenson said police left Gwerder lying on the ground dying for 20 minutes after he was shot. Officers were also accused of taser-ing him after the fatal shot and refusing to

allow paramedics to treat him prior to his death.

The lawyer said previous complaints against the sniper, Officer Leo Besner, have included taser-ing a man who was attempting to restrain a woman who had been threatening people with a knife in 2002; pepper-spraying an anti-war protestor standing on a side walk with a sign in 2003; and slamming a teenager into a wall who had been reading a newspaper on the sidewalk in April 2003.

He said the officer's 13-year tenure on the police force has now cost taxpayers about \$1 million for the cases in which he has been involved.

Robert J. King, president of the Portland Police Association, sent out his own release, saying Steenson used his release to attack a "good and experienced" officer and to "presumably flaunt a settlement."

In an interview with The Oregonian newspaper, King said Besner has undergone extensive training and participated in high-risk searches.

"He's demonstrated restraint and professionalism," King said, adding that he'd never been involved in a shooting while a member of a police special tactics team.



Raymond Gwerder



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Wind Gusts Slam City Streets

A mid-autumn storm whipped up more than 40-mile-per-hour winds throughout the Portland-metro area Monday, splintering trees such as this one on North Williams Avenue that crashed into two parked cars. Power outages were also experienced throughout the metro area. Less wind and more rain was forecast for the remainder of the week.

Troops Earn U S Citizenship

Sixty U.S. service members from countries including Cuba, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Vietnam became American citizens on Monday during a ceremony in Afghanistan.

Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, congratulated the soldiers on their new citizenship and thanked them for the oath they took to defend the United States.

"Today they will swear a second oath to the country they've already pledged to defend," Rodriguez said at a ceremony coinciding with Veterans Day. "An oath of allegiance to the nation they are supporting as a member of her armed forces,



Members of U.S. military take their oath of allegiance to become U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony at a U.S. military camp in Iraq. (AP Photo)

deployed in harm's way, defending the citizens of the world from terrorism.

"There is no better way to recognize the sacrifices they are making here than to grant them the right to call themselves U.S. citizens," Rodriguez said at the main U.S. base, Bagram.

A day earlier, more than 150 American soldiers in Iraq were sworn in as U.S. citizens during a ceremony at the Balad Air Base in Balad, north of Baghdad.

Citizenship is not a requirement to join the U.S. military, but serving in the armed forces is a way to qualify for citizenship, said spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher.

Witness Says Simpson Wanted 'Heat'

(AP) -- One of the men who accompanied O.J. Simpson to a hotel-room confrontation with two sports memorabilia dealers testified Tuesday that the former football star wanted them to bring "heat" to show they meant business.

Simpson's golfing buddy, Walter Alexander, also told the court that Simpson instructed Charles "Spencer" McClinton to draw his weapon

before the group entered the room.

"It changed the whole plan," said Alexander, who accepted a plea deal to testify against Simpson. "At first the plan was we were to just show the guns. But right before we went into the room he told Spencer to put the gun in his hand."

The testimony Tuesday was part of a preliminary hearing to decide whether there is enough



O. J. Simpson

evidence for the former NFL star and two other men to stand trial for armed robbery and other charges.

Simpson has said he intended only to retrieve items that had he said were stolen from him by a former agent, including the suit he wore the day he was acquitted of murder in 1995 in the slayings of his wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman.

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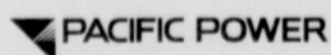
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War Costs Pegged at \$1.6 Trillion

(AP) -- The economic costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are estimated to total \$1.6 trillion — roughly double the amount the White House has requested thus far, according to a new report by Democrats on Congress' Joint Economic Committee.

The report, released Tuesday, attempted to put a price tag on the two conflicts, including "hidden" costs such as interest payments on the money borrowed to pay for the wars, lost investment, the expense of long-term health care for injured veterans and the cost of oil market disruptions.

The \$1.6 trillion figure, for the period from 2002 to 2008, translates into a cost of \$20,900 for a family of four, the report said. The Bush administration has requested \$804 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined, the report stated.

For the Second Gulf War only, total economic costs were estimated at \$1.3 trillion for the period from 2002 to 2008.