

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

GLADSTONE

Officers try to help dogs, end up in gunfight

BY NOELLE CROMBIE
The Oregonian

As Yvette Lares Garcia got into the back of a Gladstone police patrol car after her arrest one evening last fall, she told the officer she was worried about her dogs.

Gladstone Officer Clement Lau first needed to take care of Garcia's arrest. Later, he'd deal with the dilemma of her dogs. Back at the police station, Lau and Gladstone Sgt. Travis Hill talked with Garcia about her pets as she sat handcuffed to a bench in a hallway.

Garcia, 36, told them she had recently moved to Oregon. She said she didn't know anyone who could care for them. They were friendly, she assured them. Everyone loved them, she said.

The cops didn't want the animals to suffer.

And that is how two veteran police officers found themselves in a gunfight in the home of a woman who had earlier been stopped for a mundane traffic violation in Clackamas County.

The shooting left Garcia hospitalized, and Hill suffered serious injuries.

New details from the Nov. 22 shooting emerged in a hearing Tuesday in Clackamas County Circuit Court.

Garcia faces multiple counts of attempted murder or aggravated murder, first-degree assault and unlawful use of a weapon.

The Clackamas County District Attorney's Office sought to have Garcia held without bail or held on \$750,000 bail and be required to post the full amount.

Garcia's lawyer, Michael Romano, sought Garcia's release

on bail on \$250,000 while her case is pending.

Ordinary traffic stop

Lau testified about what started as an ordinary traffic stop just before 8 p.m. He saw Garcia driving through a stop sign.

Lau stopped Garcia and dispatchers ran her name for potential outstanding warrants.

The search returned a hit: Garcia, it turned out, was wanted on a felony theft warrant from Texas. Detectives in Clackamas County later learned Garcia allegedly embezzled \$1.4 million from an oil company in Ector County.

Lau returned to Garcia's car and told her she was under arrest. She would be extradited to Texas to face charges, he said. By then, Hill had pulled up to help Lau.

She was handcuffed and placed in the back of Lau's car.

At the police station, Lau testified that he and Hill eventually settled on a plan: The officers agreed to drive Garcia home, where she would help get the dogs on leashes so they could be taken to animal control.

"I explained what the plan was, how we were going to take care of the dogs," Hill testified. He told her he didn't want the officers' gesture of good will to "go sideways."

"The indication was that she was agreeing that she would be cooperative," he said.

Lau had one more question before they headed out: Did she have any guns at home? Their conversation was captured on his body-worn camera, which was played in court.

Garcia didn't answer, according to the video. The officers



Doug Beghtel/The Oregonian

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— Clement Lau, Gladstone officer

didn't press the matter.

When they arrived at the house, the situation wasn't what Lau expected. The dogs, a breed Garcia identified for police as XL Bully, were larger than he had assumed. His body-camera footage showed the excited animals barking as Garcia let them into the house.

One tried to nip at him, Lau said.

Hill managed to get one of the dogs on a leash, Lau testified. Lau held the leash and stayed with the dog in the ga-

rage.

Hill then headed into the house — and out of Lau's sight — with Garcia to get the second dog.

Hill said he thought Garcia "had been pretty cooperative" so far, so he decided to let her find her own leash and collar, which she said was upstairs. The dog that was still inside the house was harder to contain, Hill said.

"I was pretty agreeable that we could go to the bedroom and retrieve that leash," he said.

Handgun spotted

Once in the bedroom, Hill didn't see a leash and collar, he said. At one point, Garcia made a motion to suggest that it was near the door, he said.

He glanced briefly in that direction and then noticed Garcia kneel or bend down, her hands still cuffed behind her. "As she came back up with

her hands behind her back, she had a handgun in her hands and turned towards me and said, 'I am not going to jail' or 'I am not going back to (expletive) jail' and then started shooting," Hill testified. "I was totally caught off guard thinking that she was going to have the leash so I hastily tried to get out of the room."

She fired what investigators on Tuesday testified was a 9 mm handgun, he said.

"All I could think about was that I was going to get hurt or killed," he said.

Downstairs, Lau said he heard Hill "screaming in pain." He called "code zero" into his radio, the signal used when officers' lives are in danger or under attack.

Hill yelled that Garcia had a gun, Lau testified.

Over and over, the men ordered Garcia to drop the gun. "No!" she can be heard say-

ing on Lau's body-worn camera recording.

Hill scrambled downstairs and additional officers arrived to arrest Garcia.

Investigators testified that the officers fired a total of 15 rounds. Garcia, they concluded, fired three.

She hit Hill twice, below his knee and in his arm, the officer testified. Garcia was struck multiple times, including in her leg, spine, arm and abdomen, according to court testimony.

During the hearing, Hill walked in with a slight limp, a sign of the lingering effects of his injury. He testified that he sustained nerve damage in his leg and is still in pain. He remains on medical leave.

Lau, who previously worked as a Portland police officer, is back on the job.

The hearing spanned more than 10 hours.

Garcia sat next to her lawyer, her hair in two French braids and her waist and ankles in shackles. She was hospitalized as a result of her injuries, which one of her friends said left her in pain and in need of physical therapy.

She admitted under questioning that she shot Hill.

The fate of her dogs is unclear.

In the end, the judge called Garcia's actions deceptive. She had told police she didn't know anyone who could care for her dogs and yet a man she worked with in Hillsboro described their relationship as close, Weston said. When asked if she had a gun at home, she didn't respond, he noted.

He sided with the district attorney and kept her bail at the full \$750,000.

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