

Police Continue Search for Gunman in Washington Shooting

Suspect has long criminal record, was shot during his attack on four police officers

By JOSHUA PHILIPP
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All flags were lowered to half-staff in Pierce County, Washington State on Monday, while police continued their manhunt for Maurice Clemmons, who is suspect in the killings of four police officers on Sunday.

"This cowardly ambush reminds us that day after day police officers risk their lives for the community," said Pierce County Prosecutor Mark Lindquist in a statement, adding that his office is "assisting in every way possible to help bring the killer to justice."

Clemmons was shot by one of the officers during his Sunday shooting at a coffee house. According to the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management, he is considered to be wounded and armed. The award for his arrest was raised from \$100,000 to \$125,000 on Monday.

The attack, which the Washington State Patrol called a "planned ambush," took place on Sunday, when Clemmons is suspected to have walked into a coffee house where four police officers were doing their morning paperwork, and opened fire on them. Clemmons did not threaten or attack customers or workers in the coffee house before he fled the scene.

Clemmons has a long and disturbing criminal record and has been in and out of prison. He has been sentenced to a total of 108 years in prison in his life. When he was 18, he was sentenced to 95 years in prison for a string of burglaries, theft, and possession of a firearm in 1990.

He was released on parole after Republican candidate hopeful for the 2012 presidential elections Mike Huckabee commuted his sentence in 2000. Huckabee, the current governor of Arkansas, issued a statement Sunday, saying should Clemmons "be found to be responsible for this horrible tragedy, it will be the result of a series of failures in the criminal justice system in both Arkansas and Washington State."

After being released, Clemmons was sent to prison again for violating parole and was released in 2004.

In July, he was charged and later sentenced for the May 10, 2009 rape



SHRINE: Mourners visit a shrine outside of the Lakewood Police headquarters for four officers who were killed Nov. 30 in Lakewood, Washington. STEPHEN BRASHEAR/GETTY IMAGES

of a girl between the age of 12 and 13 years old.

Victims of related incidents said they went along with his requests "because they were all afraid of the way the defendant was acting..." according to court documents on the case provided by the Pierce County Legal Information Network

Exchange. The document continues that Clemmons claimed he was Jesus.

"The defendant's sister reported that the defendant had not been himself lately," says the document.

"He had said that the secret service was coming to get him because he had written a letter to the president.

The defendant's behavior had reportedly become unpredictable and erratic."

Clemmons was released on bail just several days before his suspected killings of Lakewood Police officers Sergeant Mark Renninger, Ronald Owens, Tina Griswold, and Greg Richards in Sunday's shooting.



TROOP SURGE: U.S. Marines on patrol in Mian Poshteh in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on Nov. 19. President Obama is expected to announce his new Afghan strategy involving the deployment of about 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan. MANPREET ROMANA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Obama Sets New Afghan Strategy

WASHINGTON (Reuters)—President Barack Obama on Monday prepared to announce he will deploy about 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan as part of a new strategy that aims to lay the ground for an eventual withdrawal.

After three months of deliberations, Obama will outline his plans in an address to war-weary Americans on Tuesday at 8 p.m. EST from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

His aim is to turn the tide on what U.S. military commanders call a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan due to a resurgent Taliban. He may face a tough sell at home with many Americans skeptical of sending more troops and wanting more focus on the weak U.S. economy and 10.2 percent jobless rate.

Obama told U.S. military commanders on Sunday that he had settled on a plan and gave the orders to carry it out, the White House said. He also held a meeting to inform top advisers of his decision.

"The commander in chief delivered the orders," said White House spokesman Robert Gibbs.

Obama briefed allies on his plan on Monday and will talk to congressional leaders on Tuesday before delivering his speech.

The troop increase represents a major investment by Obama in the war shortly before he travels to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. It will likely set off a battle in the U.S. Congress over funding since his own Democrats oppose a big troop surge. The added cost could reach \$20-40 billion.

STRATEGY SHIFT

Gibbs would not detail Obama's strategy, but other U.S. officials said Obama would announce that he has authorized sending about 30,000

more troops to Afghanistan.

The shift in strategy will put a greater emphasis on securing Afghan population centers and a major increase in training of Afghan security forces to gradually assume control.

Obama's emerging plan attempts to satisfy concerns on both sides of the U.S. political divide and represents a middle ground between conflicting options advocated by some of his senior advisers.

Sending more troops addresses demands from his generals and congressional Republicans, while stressing that the U.S. commitment is not open-ended is an attempt to placate skeptical Democrats and many Americans weary of the war and its cost.

Obama is not expected to set a specific pullout date. The strategy envisages a phased-in troop buildup over the next 12 to 18 months followed by a gradual U.S. drawdown and handover to Afghan forces over three to five years, officials said.

Pentagon officials hope NATO member-states eventually will supplement the U.S. surge with up to 10,000 of their own troops and trainers, pushing the overall number of extra troops close to 40,000, the number recommended by the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal.

But Britain has said it expects countries to pledge a further 5,000 troops on top of those sent by Obama.

"You will hear the president discuss clearly that this is not open-ended. ... This is about what has to be done in order to assume that the Afghans can assume the responsibility of securing their country," Gibbs said.



AIDS DAY: The White House displays a large red ribbon on Nov. 30 on the eve of World AIDS day. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the International AIDS Society will host its 2012 conference in Washington, as the Obama administration lifts a 22-year-old ban on HIV-positive visitors. ALEX OGLE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

U.S. to Drop HIV Ban, Host 2012 AIDS Meeting

WASHINGTON (Reuters)—The United States, which is preparing to lift a ban on visits by foreigners infected with HIV, will host a global AIDS conference in 2012 as a sign of redoubled U.S. commitment to fight the pandemic, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Tuesday.

"We have to continue to seek a global solution to this global problem," Clinton told a news briefing announcing the 2012 biannual conference would take place in Washington D.C., the first time it has been on U.S. soil since 1990.

The International AIDS Society, which organizes the conference, hailed the change and urged other nations that maintain bans on HIV-positive visitors to follow suit.

"The return of the conference to the United States is the result of years of dedicated advocacy to end a misguided policy based on fear, rather

than science," IAS President-elect Elly Katabira said in a statement.

Clinton said the end of the ban on HIV-positive visitors to the United States, enacted 22 years ago, would take effect in early January and would be "vigorously" enforced.

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said the end of the ban was an important shift.

"It was a policy that tore apart families, kept people from getting tested, forced others to hide their HIV status and forgo lifesaving medication ... and most of all it didn't reflect America's leadership in fighting the disease around the world," Sebelius told the news conference.

The AIDS virus infects 33 million people globally and around a million in the United States, but more people are living longer due to the availability of drugs, according to a recent United Nations report.

However, more than half of the people who need life-saving drugs are not getting them, according to the 2009 AIDS epidemic update by the World Health Organization and Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS.

Cocktails of drugs can control HIV but there is no cure.

While the Obama administration has vowed to continue the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief or PEPFAR, launched during the Bush administration, some AIDS activists have voiced concern that the issue may not get as much attention as Washington confronts a raft of other global problems.

Eric Goosby, the new U.S. global AIDS coordinator, told the news conference that a full report plotting the future of PEPFAR would be issued later this week and would show expanded U.S. support for the world battle against HIV/AIDS.

Debate Begins on Senate Health Care Legislation

HEALTH CARE CONTINUED FROM A1 Monday's session is seen by many as the beginning of a long fight split on party lines and ideological differences about the role and responsibility of the U.S. government.

Like the early November vote in the House, the Senate battle promises to be

a close one, with the fate of the legislation possibly in the hands of a few moderate Democrats who presently voice reservations over draft legislation.

On Nov. 7, H.R. 3692 - the Democrats' "Affordable Health Care for America Act"—narrowly passed the House by two votes: 220-215. Thirty-nine Democrats

voted against the legislation

If the Senate can pass its own health care reform legislation, the next step is to reconcile Senate and House proposals and merge the two bills. The House and Senate chambers would then vote on the revised bill before submission to the president.

Supreme Court Blocks ACLU's Request for Torture Pictures

By JACK PHILLIPS
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The U.S. Supreme Court overruled an appeals court decision ordering the release of photos depicting the torture of overseas prisoners.

Last month, President Obama signed a law that gave the right for the Department of Defense to not disclose the photos, exempting them from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a FOIA lawsuit, requesting the disclosure of the torture photos.

In 2008, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit gave a ruling that requested that the photos be released. This ruling was overturned by the recent bill signed by President Obama last month due to Homeland Security concerns, according to the White House.

Initially, President Obama said he would observe the decision made by the Appeals Court and release the photos, which were taken under the Bush administration.

Legal Director of the ACLU, Steven R. Shapiro, said the ACLU intends "to press that case in the lower court" because "no democracy has ever been made stronger by suppressing

evidence of its own misconduct" in a recent ACLU press release.

In 2005 the ACLU first started its litigation for the release of the photos. A New York district court ruled that the photos should be released.

Jameel Jaffer, director of the ACLU National Security Project, said that there is "a strong public interest in the photos' release," citing that the

photos' disclosure could make it more unlikely for the occurrence of such abuses in the future.

He added that the decision "sets a very dangerous precedent."

According to the Department of Justice's Web site, the Freedom of Information Act requires federal agencies to "disclose records" when any person files a written request.

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