

Judge, Deputy Wounded in Courthouse Attack

Local News

Posted by:

Posted on : March 9, 2012 at 5:11 pm

A man stabbed a judge and shot a sheriff's deputy with her own weapon in a courthouse struggle Friday in a Washington state town that was later placed on lockdown as authorities hunted for the assailant. The suspect might still have the officer's gun and was last seen running from the courthouse, Grays Harbor County Undersheriff Rick Scott said. The motive for the attack in Montesano, about 90 miles southwest of Seattle, wasn't clear. Much of the town of about 4,000 people went into lockdown during the afternoon as authorities searched for the man. The lockdown on schools was lifted in the afternoon, but afterschool activities were canceled. At a news conference, Scott said the deputy was responding to a report of a suspicious person at the courthouse. When she confronted him, there was a struggle, and she was stabbed with either a small knife or scissors.

Judge David Edwards intervened, striking the assailant. But the man managed to stab the judge. Deputy Polly Davin then went for her gun, but it was wrestled away by the man, who shot twice, striking her in the shoulder before fleeing, Scott said. "The suspect is at large," he said. "We do not have the officer's weapon." Edwards and Davin were stable and conscious at Grays Harbor Community Hospital, spokesman David Quigg said. The attack comes less than three months after Edwards had joined a lawsuit filed over state budget cuts he said were making the courthouse less safe. The courthouse is not equipped with a metal detector and there was no on-site security on Friday, Scott said. "Our courthouse is one of the few of its size that doesn't have full-time security," he said. "We just had a discussion about courthouse security less than a week ago. The need for that is certainly illustrated by situations like this." There have been a number of dangerous episodes inside the courthouse over the last two years, including a defendant charging at one judge in a courtroom and a man armed with knife asking directions to the office of a judge, the lawsuit filed in December said. "Anyone can enter the courthouse carrying weapons," it said. According to budget information from the county, the superior court budget was cut from \$733,320 in 2010 to \$645,818 for 2012. Kathie Wilson, who works at a law firm near the courthouse, said her office locked their doors after getting a call from her daughter-in-law, who was locked in a school while picking up her child. A SWAT team stormed a house where the suspect was believed to be, but apparently found nobody inside. A half-dozen officers in camouflage uniforms took cover after tossing a device inside that caused a sound similar to a small blast and a cloud of white smoke. Edwards was appointed to Grays Harbor County Superior Court in 2007 by Gov. Chris Gregoire. He had been a private attorney, and had also served as a prosecutor in the late 1970s. ---Associated Press writers Doug Esser and Manuel Valdes in Seattle, Shannon Dininny in Yakima, Wash., and Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Wash., contributed to this report.