

Joint Media Release
Kitsap County Sheriff
Kitsap County Prosecuting Attorney
Kitsap County Board of Commissioners



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Lawsuit settlement decision opposed by county officials

Port Orchard, Wash. -- Sheriff Steve Boyer, Prosecutor Russell Hauge and the Board of County Commissioners have jointly opposed the monetary settlement reached by the Washington Counties Risk Pool with the parents and estate of an armed assailant who had threatened the lives of two sheriff's deputies.

The order approving settlement was filed yesterday in U. S. District Court, Tacoma. The risk pool settled with the plaintiffs for \$217,500.

Background:

Around 4:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 16, 2006, the lives of two Kitsap County Sheriff's patrol deputies were threatened by an adult male wielding a machete. Despite their retreat and repeated commands to drop the weapon, the man, Shane Williams, began swinging the blade and continued his advance toward them. The deputies opened fire and killed the armed assailant in self-defense as authorized by law.

The assailant's parents and his estate filed suit against the deputies and the county, alleging violation of the assailant's Constitutional rights by the deputies' actions in defending their lives.

Kitsap County, along with 27 other counties in the state, is a member of the Washington Counties Risk Pool. The risk pool has the right to impose an insurance settlement on member agencies. The pool settled this case with the plaintiffs for \$217,500.

“This settlement sends the wrong message to each deputy who risks his or her life to ensure our safety,” said Sheriff Steve Boyer. “Often unthanked and unrewarded, our law enforcement officers face untold risk of harm on a daily basis to protect us and to preserve the peace and safety of our community. This risk has been more paramount now more than ever, given recent events.”

“Not only is this an affront to our deputies, it makes no sense from a legal perspective,” said Prosecutor Russ Hauge. “The law is very clear: peace officers have the right to take steps necessary to defend themselves. When faced with someone wielding a machete – a clear case of ‘suicide by officer’ – our deputies and officers have the right to defend themselves with lethal force. This case should have been tried and it would have been won.”

Commissioner Josh Brown reiterated the entire board’s support for the deputies and the county’s desire to take this case to trial, stating, “The deputies in this case did no wrong, and should be recognized for the duty they performed and continue to perform on our behalf. We stand strongly behind our deputies.”

Commissioner Charlotte Garrido added, “We collectively and unanimously opposed any settlement of this matter, and requested that these meritless claims be taken to trial – to both defend the integrity and actions of our deputies and bring to an end the expectation by any plaintiff that a frivolous lawsuit will be rewarded.”

Commissioner Steve Bauer agreed, noting, “Settling meritless suits rewards criminal actions and it jeopardizes the safety of any law enforcement officer who may delay reacting, for even a second; that delay may cost innocent lives.”

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