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# Family was trying to get help for Pentagon shooting suspect

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Lora Schraft, Staff Photographer

Posted: Friday, March 5, 2010 12:00 am

Melissa Flores | 0 comments

John Patrick Bedell's family was well aware the 36-year-old Hollister resident had been suffering from mental illness and attempted for years to get help for him before he shot two Pentagon officers Thursday and died from return gunfire.

"The family was working with their son on mental issues," San Benito County Sheriff Curtis Hill said at a 12:30 p.m. news conference at the board of supervisors chambers.

Bedell's parents reported him missing on Jan. 4 to the San Benito County Sheriff's Office. According to the report, his parents had received a call from his cell phone from a Texas Highway Patrol officer who had pulled him over in Amarillo, Texas for speeding.

The officer called the family and reached his mother because he said the car was in disarray. At the time, Bedell was driving westbound and was believed to have been on the East Coast, the sheriff said.

The officer said he was calling because he wanted more information on Bedell. Beyond the vehicle being in disarray, Hill said it was unclear if any other reasons prompted the inquiry from the officer, whom the sheriff reported as giving Bedell a warning before letting him go.

Said Supervisor Reb Monaco, who is close with the family: "She, in fact, personally begged the officer to take him to a mental health clinic. The officer said there's nothing he could do."

The call prompted the parents - who had not seen their son since Dec. 30, according to the sheriff - to file the missing person's report with the local office.

Deputies went to the family's home, took down a description of Bedell and information about his vehicle. Hill said he did not know whether Bedell had any history of going missing or if it came up in questioning.

Hill said Bedell's parents said he had been committed for mental health treatment three or four times, though Hill stressed that Bedell had never been involuntarily detained by the local sheriff's office. It is unclear if the commitments were voluntary or involuntary in other jurisdictions.

His mother also said Bedell had a medical marijuana card and appeared "to be impaired" when she talked to him on Jan. 11. Bedell was charged in Orange County in 2006 with possession of marijuana and had a history of using the drug.

Bedell's mother also noted that she saw an online posting showing he spent \$600 at a Sacramento shooting range Jan. 10 and questioned him about it. It is not clear

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what he purchased, but Hill noted there is a 15-day waiting period to purchase a firearm in California.

On Jan. 18, Bedell's father called and canceled the missing person's report when his son returned home.

"He said to go ahead and cancel the missing person's report," Hill said. "They'd had a short exchange."

Bedell told his father, "Don't ask where I've been or what I've been doing," Hill said. And the sheriff's office closed the case.

"First and foremost, this is a terrible tragedy," Hill said. "My organization is concerned about our brother officers in Washington, D.C. [In law enforcement] you go to work and kiss your family good-bye and hope you will see them again."

Hill stressed that the sheriff's department does not have any information on Bedell's actions or whereabouts after Jan. 18.

"The tragedy is that with mental health issues, the family was struggling with it," Hill said. "It is devastating that this family was attempting to try to help their son through issues to prevent these types of behaviors."

Hill added that law enforcement officers across the United States deal with mental health issues all year long. About 30 members of the local and national press were present at the press conference in the early afternoon, while about a dozen were at a later media conference.

*Editor Kollin Kosmicki contributed to this report.*

**Below is an earlier story from the Free Lance staff:**

The 36-year-old man suspected in the Pentagon shooting Thursday was from Hollister and graduated from San Benito High School, local and media sources have confirmed.

John Patrick Bedell was identified shortly after the shootings by the Associated Press.

Local sources have confirmed Bedell is the son of Kaye Bedell, the director of allied health at Gavilan College, and his father is John Bedell, Sr., a local financial planner. Bedell's grandfather, O.J. Bedell, was the longtime president of Bank of America here.

San Benito County Supervisor Reb Monaco confirmed to the Free Lance he and his family have been "close" with the Bedells for "30-something years."

"I am just shocked by it," said Monaco, who had just heard about the local connection.

The District 4 supervisor said he has known Bedell since the suspected gunman was a "little kid" but he has not had contact with him in the past few years.

Monaco said the last he had heard, Bedell was going to school full time, but that was "several months ago."

Bedell graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2002 in chemical engineering after also attending Gavilan College. He had been enrolled as a graduate student at San Jose State University last semester for electrical engineering, but was not enrolled for the spring.

Bedell attended San Benito High School, but district Superintendent Stan Rose confirmed he left the school in 1989 before graduating. Monaco confirmed Bedell from there earned a GED.

It is unclear whether Bedell had a criminal history elsewhere, but San Benito County Courthouse records show that he had no documented, criminal history here. There also are no records of Bedell at the San Benito County Jail, according to personnel there.

Sheriff Curtis Hill said he was unsure whether the gun used in the shootings was registered here. He said the information would have to come from the FBI, which is handling the investigation.

Hill has received a flood of calls nationwide about the shootings and he pointed out how news outlets were lined at the gates of Ridgemark, where Bedell's family lives, on Thursday night.

Hill declined to comment further and said he was awaiting more information from the FBI.

**Below is the story from McClatchy-Tribune News:**

An armed man apparently planning to enter the Pentagon walked impassively up to police officers guarding the doors of the massive building and opened fire early Thursday evening, wounding two officers before he was shot himself.

Multiple media sources have confirmed the man is from Hollister.

The gunfight took place just yards from the entrance to the giant defense installation as workers were still heading home for the evening, police said. Workers were ordered back to their offices and the building was locked down for a period of time, with no one allowed in or out.

"He walked up, very cool. He had no distress, no emotion in his face," said Richard S. Keevill, chief of the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, the civilian police agency that guards the five-sided building. "When he reached in his pocket, they assumed he was going to get his (building) pass out. He came out with a gun."

The gunman began firing, hitting the two officers, who then fired back at the shooter. Both officers were taken to George Washington University hospital for treatment of non-life threatening injuries. The gunman was listed in critical condition.

The area just outside the Pentagon is heavily trafficked by commuters, serving as a transit hub both for the Washington Metro railway system and many of the region's buses. The Metro station is one of the busiest in the Washington-area system, with thousands of commuters passing through, transferring from trains to buses.

The Metro entrance is just outside the doors of the Pentagon, meaning anyone can approach the building from the Metro. A force of officers

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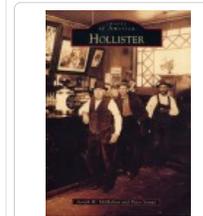
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guards the entrance during working hours and people who work inside must flash a badge before entering. Those without badges are ushered to a metal detector to be searched, then are escorted inside.

Officials did not identify the man or specify motives, although he was identified by the AP as 36-year-old John Patrick Bedell.

The Associated Press said investigators were considering the possibility that a second suspect was involved.

Officials refused to speculate on the gunman's motives. "We just do not have enough information on the suspect to make those determinations this evening," said Bryan G. Whitman, the Pentagon spokesman.

However, Whitman agreed with Keevill that the gunman was trying to get inside the building.

"He was obviously trying to gain entrance," said Whitman.

Police said no words were exchanged between the gunman and the officers before shots began flying, sending commuters screaming and scrambling for cover, witnesses told local television news stations.

Keevill said the officers were wearing protective vests. He said he could not say whether the gunman also was wearing a vest and would not describe the assailant's clothing. Keevill would not say whether the man was a Defense Department employee. Police said a third officer was involved in the incident, but did not say in what way.

In 2005, a Pentagon police officer, James M. Feltis III, became the only officer to die in the line of duty when he was struck by a stolen car driven by a man who was fleeing police. No Pentagon police officers were killed in the Sept. 11 attack on the Pentagon.

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Melissa Flores City Editor



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