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Man killed in Olmsted Falls standoff Detective working on molestation case placed on leave

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Article Text:

Corrections and clarifications: The following published correction appeared on August 12, 2004: Because of a reporter's error, an article on page B1 Wednesday about the fatal police shooting of Raymond W. Klesta in Olmsted Falls incorrectly said the last fatal police shooting was in 1984. There was no fatal shooting by police before Tuesday, said Police Chief Jeff Rice. Klesta had been involved in a shooting in 1984.

Olmsted Falls – The city's lone detective, buried for a week in a ballooning child-molestation probe, is off the case temporarily after shooting and killing a man Tuesday during a standoff. Detective Alex Bakos is a member of a SWAT team called to deal with a gun-wielding suicidal man. Bakos shot the 41-year-old three times in the heart and also hit the barrel of a gun the man had aimed at a fellow officer, said Chief Jeff Rice.

Raymond W. Klesta of North Olmsted was taken to a hospital but died.

Bakos was automatically placed on paid leave while the city reviews the shooting, but Rice said he believes Bakos acted properly. Officials have also asked the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office to help investigate.

Bakos could be back to work as soon as Friday, depending on how he feels. City Prosecutor Brad Burland said the case being built against Jimmy Ray Thompson, a case Bakos was entrenched in, will be picked up by other officers who have been trained in detective work.

"His caseload isn't going to sit dormant." Burland said. Bakos had completed most of the case, except for following up with the alleged victims, Burland said.

Other law enforcement agencies are analyzing video, audio and photographic evidence seized from Thompson's townhouse last week.

Thompson, charged Monday with 21 counts of rape and more than 2,800 other sex-related charges involving minors, is in the Cuyahoga County Jail under \$1 million bond.

(SEE CORRECTION NOTE) The last time Olmsted Falls police had a fatal shooting was 1984. Tuesday's standoff began at 10 a.m. after Klesta's brother told police that he had found a suicide note and a rope hanging from the rafters of a barn at Klesta Builders, a family business on North Depot Street, Rice said.

Police tracked Klesta to his brother's house on Brookside Avenue and found him in the back yard with a shotgun pointed at his head.

Patrol officers tried to talk to Klesta and calm him down, but he became agitated and told them to leave, Rice said.

Klesta carried two shotguns and had a revolver in the house. He shot at officers at least once, Rice said.

Police called in a multiagency Special Weapons and Tactics team trained to defuse standoff situations. Bakos trains with the group regularly as a sniper.

When Bakos tried to speak to Klesta, the man pointed the gun at another officer. Bakos fired an AR-15 rifle, striking Klesta.

Authorities declined to describe Klesta's suicide note. A relative, who did not want to be identified, said the man was a father of three and a carpenter.

Court records show Klesta had some recent civil judgments against him in Cuyahoga County related to construction deals. His wife had been trying to serve him with court papers involving asking for a separation.

Burland, the city prosecutor, said the community of about 8,000 sees its share of crime and tragedy, just not usually all within a week.

"As one dispatcher asked, 'Is it the air, or is it the water?'"

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Caption:

C.H. PETE COPELAND THE PLAIN DEALER Members of the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office search the shooting scene in the back yard of a home on Brookside Avenue in Olmsted Falls Tuesday.

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