

Tehama county - Two shootings by officers - Chico Enterprise-Record (Chico, CA) - July 28, 2018 - page 3

July 28, 2018 | Chico Enterprise-Record (Chico, CA) | By Julie Zeeb jzeeb@redbluffdailynews.com @DN_Zeeb on Twitter | Article | Page 3

RED BLUFF >> Tehama County officers have been found to be justified in shooting suspects June 6 in Red Bluff and July 7 in Los Molinos.

The actions were determined to be legal and justified to protect lives and to prevent threat of injury to the public, Assistant District Attorney Matt Rogers said in a press conference Thursday.

In the Red Bluff incident, the Tehama County Sheriff's Office was contacted about 11:30 a.m. June 6 by the girlfriend of **Abraham Flores**, the armed man, reporting he was suicidal and armed with a pistol and scoped rifle.

The woman told law enforcement he had sent her a text message saying he was at the old Diamond Mill property. When she said she was going to call the police, he said "I'm going to make them kill me."

His position was on a dirt mound more than 26 feet above law enforcement, Rogers said. This vantage point gave him an unobstructed view and put targets at risk at the nearby Shasta College Tehama Campus, the Red Bluff Diversion Dam campground, traffic on Interstate 5 and Highway 99W, as well as approaching law enforcement.

Law enforcement staged about 200 yards away. The girlfriend spent about 42 minutes on the mound trying to convince him to let law enforcement help him. Flores refused and indicated he wanted to be shot, Rogers said.

Flores taunted deputies, Rogers said. He showed a photo of Flores holding his arms out perpendicular to his body with a firearm in each hand, taken about 10 seconds prior to being shot by a sheriff's sergeant who believed Flores was about to shoot.

Medics responded, but Flores was already dead, Rogers said. Additional weapons were recovered from his vehicle.

In the July 7 incident at the Dollar General in Los Molinos, Rogers said the deputy's actions not only saved his life and the woman who was on a ride-along, but quite possibly other members of the public.

Because of the suspect's criminal history and possession of 12 ounces of cocaine, five pounds of marijuana and THC vape capsules, it was "an understatement that he was up to no good," Rogers said.

The incident began just before 7:30 p.m. when the deputy saw Jose Alfredo Barajas, 28, of Stockton, switching a license plate in the Dollar General parking lot. The deputy gathered probable cause to search the vehicle, at which point Barajas became combative and a struggle ensued. Barajas got in and locked his vehicle.

Believing a pursuit was about to begin, the deputy got into his vehicle. Barajas lowered his window and fired a semi-automatic, large caliber rifle at the deputy. Barajas sped away, headed north on Highway 99.

He was seen entering northbound Interstate 5 in Red Bluff where a California Highway Patrol officer and two Red Bluff Police units attempted to overtake the vehicle. Barajas was a considerable distance ahead of law enforcement when he lost control, crashing on the east side of I-5 north of Jellys Ferry Road.

Barajas was found dead inside the vehicle. Based on significant damage to the rear of the sedan and the lack of air bag deployment in a seat with a passenger sensor, authorities determined there was no second person.

Barajas had two AK-47 rifles, two AR-15 rifles and two Glock pistols in his possession along with multiple high capacity magazines.

"Barajas possessed over 1,000 rounds for his AK-47 rifles and over 1,000 rounds for his glock pistols," Rogers said. "Between rifle casings located at the shooting scene in Los Molinos and inside Barajas' vehicle, it was discovered that Barajas fired his AK-47 rifle 71 times."

The deputy's vehicle was struck 27 times. The deputy, who was hit three times, protected his passenger prior to getting out and returning fire. Two of his wounds were graze wounds, but one entered and exited his left shoulder.

The woman was hit twice with graze wounds and the police dog in the rear cage of the vehicle was not injured.

The deputy fired his weapon 16 times with five rounds hitting Barajas and six hitting his vehicle. The self-inflicted shot to the head was the cause of death, Rogers said. There was a suicide note found in the vehicle at the crash scene.

Contact reporter Julie Zeeb at 530-737-5053.