

Gunman, two dead in police standoff

By Bobby Ross Jr.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — For the second time in less than three months, Francisco Fuentes held police at bay in a standoff that lasted hours. Unlike his peaceful surrender before, Wednesday's standoff ended with Fuentes and two other men dead and four officers wounded.

Fuentes held a woman and three children — at least two of them his — hostage for nine hours before freeing them unharmed during the nine-hour standoff, police said. Officers rescued four other children when they responded to reports of gunfire at the apartment early Wednesday. Three officers were shot then.

SWAT team officers entered the apartment after Fuentes, 32, released the final hostage, a little girl, shortly before noon. Barricaded in a bathroom, the gunman again opened fire, injuring a fourth officer, police spokesman Sgt. Gil Cerda said.

"They returned fire on him," Cerda said. Fuentes broke into the apartment about 2:45 a.m. He fatally shot Mario Rios, 30, once in the chest with a shotgun, according to a police report.

Fuentes went into the bedroom where the woman and John Watson, 31, had been sleeping and shot Watson in the head, the report said. Fuentes then barricaded himself in the bedroom with the hostages.

The report identified the woman, who was not named, as Fuentes' wife.

Acquaintances described her as his ex-wife.

In early September, Fuentes was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon after a five-hour standoff in the nearby suburb of Lancaster. Lancaster police Commander Pat Stallings said Fuentes barricaded himself alone in a house after shooting at Watson's car. Fuentes and Watson had argued earlier that day about Fuentes' children at the apartment complex where Wednesday's standoff occurred.

Geoff Wool, spokesman for the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, said the agency was called out to the family's home two times this year, once over a custody dispute. In neither instance, was Fuentes the alleged perpetrator, Wool said.

Fuentes was facing at least four charges in Dallas County, including two for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, interfering with child custody and violation of a protective order. He was free on \$25,000 bond in each of the assault cases and was scheduled to appear in court next week, records show.

Sandy Besanceney, a friend of the Rios family, said his mother was distraught over the slaying.

Of Fuentes, she said, "I heard he had threatened he was going to do this, but nobody believed he'd do it."

Upon their arrival early Wednesday, police saw a body on the living room floor and children gathered around it, police spokesman Senior Cpl. Chris Gilliam said. The said they heard "a gurgling or choking sound" in an adjoining bedroom.

Fuentes fired a shotgun as officers tried to enter the bedroom — one blast apparently hitting all three as they attempted to squeeze through the door, Gilliam said. Police did not return fire and fled the apartment with the children.

"They ran out and told us to run," said neighbor Darrell Davis, 42, wrapped in a yellow poncho near a gate at the Meadow Parc Apartments. "We ran all the way down here."

"It wasn't scary," he added, "until they walked into the apartment and the guy started shooting."

All the wounded officers — Edward Coffey, Michael Flusche, Michael Patino and Douglas Brady — were hospitalized in good condition and their injuries are not life-threatening, authorities said.

"We were real fortunate and lucky that none of these officers right now are in real serious condition," Cerda said.

"Obviously this brings to light what kind of danger police officers place themselves in. It may not happen for several months or even a year, but then all of a sudden today we get four officers who were hit," he said.

"We were real fortunate and lucky that none of these officers ... are in real serious condition."

— Sgt. Gil Cerda
police spokesman

U.S. Senate readying for all-night talkathon

By Jesse J. Holland
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Senate readied cots and coffee for a talkathon set to last all Wednesday night on who's to blame for some of President Bush's nominees not making it to the federal appeals bench.

For 30 straight hours — from Wednesday evening through midnight Thursday —

Republicans and Democrats will condemn each other in 30-minute face-offs over four filibustered U.S. Appeals Court nominees: Alabama Attorney General William Pryor, Texas judge Priscilla Owen, Mississippi judge Charles Pickering and Hispanic lawyer Miguel Estrada.

Democrats have refused to allow confirmation votes, and Republicans have not been able to get the 60 votes to force them in a Senate split with 51 GOP senators, 48 Democrats and one independent. Frustrated at the delays, Estrada withdrew his nomination in September.

Republicans hope the all-night Senate session — the first to go past 4 a.m. since 1992 — will publicize the blocked nominees.

Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky told reporters Wednesday that 12 to 15 senators

All-night Senate sessions			
The top ten all-night sessions since 1915 where the Senate stayed in session past 4 a.m.:			
RANK	YEAR	ISSUE	DURATION
1	1960	Civil rights	125 hours, 16 minutes
2	1988	Senate Election Campaign Act	57 hours, 24 minutes
3	1915	Ship Purchase Act	54 hours, 10 minutes
4	1948	Closing session	44 hours, 14 minutes
5	1957	Civil rights debate	38 hours, 59 minutes
6	1982	Appropriations for fiscal year 1983	37 hours, 51 minutes
7	1927	Resolution to continue investigation of Frank L. Smith-William S. Vare election cases	37 hours, 2 minutes
8	1978	Closing session	34 hours, 16 minutes
9	1992	Tax bill	33 hours, 35 minutes
10	1980	Selective Service	32 hours, 43 minutes

SOURCE: Associated Press

AP

had requested cots so they could nap near the Senate floor. And in a preview of the arguments they will use, he and other Republican senators said the Democratic blockade of votes on the judges would come back to haunt them.

"This is a step off a cliff, because it will be answered in kind," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. "And the real winner of this process is special interest groups," who will be able to prevail by mustering a minority — 41 senators — to block Senate action.

Democrats say they're looking forward to 15 free hours to criticize the president and the GOP on the economy, problems in Iraq and Bush's choices for key judgeships. The two sides plan to split the 30 hours and trade shifts so that there will be a senator from each party on the

floor at all times.

Because Senate rules require agreement from both sides to quickly confirm a nominee, the GOP can't force a confirmation vote as long as a Democrat is present on the floor to object. But if they fall asleep or stop paying attention, Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., said, the GOP will immediately confirm the nominees.

"They're forewarned: If the floor is not protected, the vote will be" called, Santorum said. "We are going to do everything we can to do what they're doing, ratcheting up the intensity on this issue."

In turn, Daschle said, if Republicans stop paying attention, they will immediately pass Democratic legislation like a bill to raise the minimum wage or one to create a tax credit to stimulate creation of manufacturing jobs.

UNT fraternity suspended for hazing incident

DENTON, Texas (AP) — Members of a University of North Texas fraternity, suspended for hazing, are sought by police in connection with alcohol violations.

UNT police have issued arrest warrants for six Sigma Alpha Epsilon members for furnishing alcohol to minors, Deputy Chief Ed Reynolds said Wednesday.

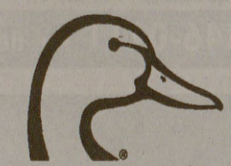
Sigma Alpha Epsilon's national headquarters has imposed a four-year suspension on the UNT chapter after police found a freshman pledge unconscious near a trash bin on Oct. 12. University officials determined the student, who required hospitalization, had been drinking at a fraternity event and that the fraternity was in violation of its own policy and the school's.

The national fraternity headquarters imposed an additional four-year suspension of the affiliations of the chapter's UNT members.

The UNT fraternity, under the suspension, cannot hold meetings, participate in service projects or accept new members.

Reynolds said the warrants were issued as a part of the criminal investigation of the October event that also resulted in the fraternity's suspension from the university.

"These are six of the fraternity members who played a significant role in making the alcohol available," Reynolds told the Denton Record-Chronicle in Wednesday's online edition.



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Hans Butzer



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