



MISSING PLANE FOUND

Body of South Dakota pilot recovered from wreckage, Page C3

The Forum

OF FARGO - MOORHEAD

EARLY EDITION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

INFORUM.COM

Senator should apologize for Omar post, ND Senate majority leader says

By Jeremy Turley and Matt Henson
Forum News Service

BISMARCK — North Dakota Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner, R-Dickinson, said Sen. Oley Larsen should issue a public apology and resign his position as interim president pro tempore after the Minot Republican called U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., a terrorist and posted a mislabeled photo of her on his Facebook page.

Republican Gov. Doug Burgum said Tuesday he supports Wardner's actions, according to spokesman Mike Nowatzki.

"Sen. Larsen's comments are not the position of the Senate Republican Caucus or the Senate as a whole," Wardner told Forum News Service on Tuesday, Oct. 22.

Wardner said Larsen should apologize for misrepresenting Omar in the photo that falsely portrayed her training at an Al Qaeda camp, but he said the post wasn't racist as some Facebook commenters have suggested. Wardner said he has not yet spoken with Larsen.

"No, I don't think it's racist. It has to do with political philosophy," Wardner said. "(Larsen and Omar) are as far apart politically as you can be."

While Wardner called on the embattled senator to resign his leadership position, he said he wouldn't ask Larsen to give up his seat in the state's highest legislative body, saying Larsen would ultimately be responsible to the people who elected him.

The interim president pro tempore would preside over the Senate during a special session of the Legislature if the lieutenant governor is absent.

Wardner said the apology and resignation of the leadership position would be a step in the right direction, but he did not rule out further disciplinary action against Larsen. Wardner said the Senate could vote to completely expel Larsen, although he said situations just as bad or worse have not led to expulsion.

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Wardner



Dave Olson / The Forum

Fargo City Attorney Erik Johnson, left, speaks to the Fargo Municipal Airport Authority board on Tuesday, Oct. 22, as Fargo City Commissioner Dave Piepkorn, lower right, listens. Piepkorn later walked out of the meeting after the airport authority rejected a proposed memorandum of understanding from the city commission.

Airport authority rejects proposal

Commissioner walks out of meeting, mayor 'disappointed' by authority's actions

By Dave Olson
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Fargo

An ongoing feud between the Fargo Municipal Airport Authority and the Fargo City Commission came to a head Tuesday, Oct. 22, when the airport authority rejected a proposed memorandum of understanding with the city and instead voted to contract

with a private company for a number of services it has been paying the city for, including human resources and payroll services.

In the process, a city commissioner serving as the commission's liaison to the authority abruptly walked out of the meeting, and Fargo Mayor Tim Mahoney subsequently issued a written statement saying that it appeared to

him the airport authority was ready to end a 50-year partnership with the city.

"I am profoundly disappointed with today's votes by the MAA," Mahoney said in his letter.

"Instead of focusing on the vital issues facing Hector International Airport and working together to build

AIRPORT: Page A5

Video evidence key to solving 2009 Fargo murder-for-hire

Editor's note: This is the fourth of four stories looking back on the murder-for-hire plot that led to Philip Gattuso's death in 2009.

FARGO — A successful dentist loses his wife to a devastating heart surgery complication, leaving their three-year-old daughter without a mother.

Six months later, the dentist is murdered, leaving the child temporarily orphaned.

Ten years ago this week, a complicated plot would unfold involving a family dispute and a hired



Robin Huebner reports

hitman. Surveillance video from near the crime scene would be crucial in finding the people responsible.

"It was like a made-for-TV movie right here in Fargo," said Fargo Police Lt. Bill Ahlfeld.

On Oct. 26, 2009, Philip Gattuso, 49, was beaten to death with a hammer in his condominium at

2536 S. University Drive.

Cass County prosecutors proved Michael Nakvinda, of Oklahoma City, killed Gattuso, and that Gene Kirkpatrick, who Nakvinda worked for as a handyman, paid him to do it.

Kirkpatrick, of Jones, Okla., is the father of the late Valerie Gattuso, Philip Gattuso's wife.

According to prosecutors, Kirkpatrick didn't want Philip raising the couple's daughter, Kennedy, after Valerie's death, and wanted

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A grainy image taken from a surveillance camera at The Bowler the day Philip Gattuso was murdered shows a pickup and trailer pulling in and parking alongside a white row of garages, upper right. Special to The Forum

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Today's weather



Cloudy & chilly
Details, D6



\$1.50
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Indigenous groups to protest 'degrading' Washington mascot

'Not Your Mascot' march set for Thursday before Vikings game

By Natasha Rausch
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MINNEAPOLIS — Indigenous protesters will hold a rally and march Thursday, Oct. 24, to urge the Washington, D.C., professional football team to retire its team name and mascot.

"The Washington team's name is a painful embodiment of the lack of respect for and understanding of Native Americans," said Rebecca Crooks-Stratton,

the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community secretary and treasurer.

Minnesota tribal governments, the National Coalition Against Racism in Sports and Media, the National Congress of American Indians and other Indigenous organizations will host the "Not Your Mascot" march and rally ahead of the Minnesota Vikings and Washington football game in Minneapolis to urge the team to "retire its degrading team name and mascot," according to a statement from the National Congress

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MURDER

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his family — specifically his other daughter, Regan Williams — to get custody. Both Kirkpatrick, now 73, and Nakvinda, now 51, were sentenced to life in prison with no chance for parole and are incarcerated at state penitentiaries in South Dakota and North Dakota, respectively.

The police investigation of the murder-for-hire case spanned multiple states and agencies. Ahlfeldt said his role was minor — checking out surveillance video from a nearby business.

However, that video provided clues police were unable to find through other means and helped them solve the case.

Stealing car suspect's undoing

Ahlfeldt said he was a newly promoted patrol sergeant, working overnights, when he was awakened by a phone call letting him know a homicide had occurred and backup was needed.

Police were called when friends of Gattuso found his body in his condo. They'd gone to check on him because he hadn't picked up

his daughter from day care. According to police reports, the place had been ransacked. Gattuso's body was lying face down on the master bedroom floor, his head in a pool of blood.

At first, police thought Gattuso might have been shot in the head. However, an autopsy showed he died of blunt force trauma from at least 10 strikes of a hammer. There were also injuries on Gattuso's wrists, which may have occurred when he tried to protect himself from those blows.

After the killing, the suspect made off with valuables from the home and Gattuso's silver 1999 Porsche Boxster. The first solid clue about that distinctive car turned up on surveillance video taken from The Bowler, just south of the condominium complex.

Early clue from video The Fargo Police Department was canvassing the area after the crime, asking people if they saw anything suspicious and nearby businesses if they had video surveillance.

Ahlfeldt said police heard early on from a couple of employees at The Bowler. "They found something, and so they called us to see if it was

pertinent or not relevant to the case," he said.

Ahlfeldt went to the business to watch the footage, since obtained by The Forum, and was struck by what he saw.

Video from The Bowler's northwest-facing camera on the day of the murder shows a pick-up and transport trailer pull into the parking lot just before 7:30 a.m.

About 15 minutes later, the person inside the truck flashes the lights on and off, almost like a signal; however, police were never able to say that was the case.

Just before 7:50 a.m., a grainy shadow of a person is seen leaving the truck and walking north, behind a restaurant next to the condo complex.

While the suspect is presumably in Gattuso's condo, activity on the video is uneventful until 10:52 a.m., when a silver Porsche travels east on 26th Ave. S., just north of The Bowler.

The video skips some, so it's not clear exactly where it went.

But four minutes later comes the "aha moment" when the truck pulls out of the lot and into a driveway next door, in a secluded area behind a row of apartment garages.

"I thought, 'Nobody's driving the car, they hauled the car

away,'" Ahlfeldt said.

Sure enough, the truck and trailer come into the video frame a half hour later, this time loaded with a tarp-covered vehicle.

They showed up in other surveillance videos going south on University and, minutes later, west on 32nd Ave. S., leading police to believe the suspect hopped on Interstate 29.

Video leads police to Nakvinda, Kirkpatrick

Ahlfeldt said authorities canvassed the entire 1-29 corridor from Fargo to Oklahoma, and hit paydirt at a rest area a few miles across the border into South Dakota.

Security video depicts the truck pulling just over an hour after having left Fargo.

The suspect is seen adjusting the tarp and walking into the rest area lobby carrying a plastic bag, and even looks straight into the security camera at one point.

A dark stain can be seen on the upper thigh of his pants — prosecutors would surmise at trial that it was blood.

The suspect comes out minutes later, wearing different clothing and still carrying the bag.

A video image from camera then shows the truck and loaded U-Haul trailer pulling out of the

rest stop.

The clues led police to an Oklahoma City U-Haul business and Michael Nakvinda. The pickup was registered to him and the trailer was rented under his name.

Ahlfeldt said officers found the bloody hammer and Gattuso's valuables in the silver Porsche inside an Oklahoma City storage unit Nakvinda rented.

After that, they connected the dots to Kirkpatrick, who admitted he talked with his handyman about having Gattuso killed, but they didn't have a formal agreement.

Some of the damning evidence against Kirkpatrick was a \$3,000 payment to Nakvinda, a video he shot of Gattuso's condo and Porsche a few weeks before the murder and a recorded statement to police about his granddaughter and Gattuso, in which he said, "I thought her future welfare was more valuable than his life."

Kennedy Gattuso, now 13, was adopted by Phillip Gattuso's niece, Molly Massey, and husband Adam, who did not want to speak on record with The Forum.

Ahlfeldt said he's glad he had a small part in getting some justice for Kennedy, who lost both parents in a matter of months.

MASCOT

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of American Indians, or NCAI.

Five years ago, 4,000 people gathered outside the Vikings' football stadium to support calling on Washington to change its

name from the "R-word," Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin said: "Since then, nothing has changed — the Washington NFL team still unapologetically uses the worst Native American racial epithet."

The nonprofit NCAI has worked to "eradicate

offensive 'Indian' mascots from sports and popular culture" by educating groups and people about the harms they cause Indigenous people, the group said in the release.

In a 2013 report, the group said "Indian" sports brands used by professional teams were born in

an era when racism and bigotry were accepted by the dominant culture."

"It's time that we correct the narrative," Crooks-Stratton said.

"Native Americans are here today with our own governments, cultures and modern stories." The March will start at

Peavy Field Park at 4 p.m. Thursday, and the rally will take place from 5-7 p.m. at the commons near the U.S. Bank Stadium.

Readers can reach Native American issues reporter Natasha Rausch, a Report for America corps member, at 701-241-5528, nrausch@forumcomm.com or @n_rausch21.

LARSEN

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The photo in question

The photo posted by Larsen was taken by the Associated Press in 1978, four years before the first Somali-American elected to Congress was born. On social media, people pointed that fact out to the senator, many criticizing him.

Larsen responded to one person by writing, "I'm begging to let everyone

know she is an elected terrorist."

On also took to social media early Monday night to respond to the post.

"This is pure propaganda designed to stir up hate and violence coming from a GOP state rep," she tweeted. "Facebook's unwillingness to crack down on hate speech and misinformation is not just threatening my life, but our democracy."

Larsen's Facebook post has since been removed,

but not before attracting the attention of critics both nationally and locally.

But the second post, which was posted a few hours later, has not been taken down as of Tuesday morning. In it, Larsen wrote, "A vet over a terrorist hope people get off the couch and take time off work to go vote her out."

It is in reference to Chris Kelley, who is running as an independent challenger to Omar next year.

"I think it's racist, I think it's offensive," said North Dakota Democratic Chairwoman Kylie Oversen, calling it a "pattern" with the senator, who earlier this year tried to get Bible classes in public schools.

A campaign ad from 2014, featured his challenger pointing out Larsen's stance on an anti-bullying bill in schools where he called kids "marshmallows."

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