

2 prison workers fired after escapes

■ Keys were left in a common area, says corrections commissioner

By Jimmie E. Gates
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Two employees of the Winston/Choctaw County Correctional Facility have been fired as a result of two inmates escaping in September.

A maintenance supervisor and his assistant were terminated, Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner Christopher Epps said Wednesday.

"They didn't follow procedure," Epps said. "They left some keys in a common area."

Epps wouldn't name the fired

employees.

On Sept. 16, inmates Tony Roberson and Jason Stroud escaped. They were captured about a week later at a residence in Natchitoches, La.

Investigators with the state Department of Corrections joined forces with the U.S. Marshals Service in Louisiana and sheriffs' deputies from Ouachita Parish, Monroe Parish and Natchitoches in capturing the escapees without incident.

Epps said escape charges were added to their sentences.

Roberson was serving a 20-year



Epps

sentence for aggravated assault and drive-by shooting. Stroud was serving a three-year sentence for possession of precursors and conspiracy to commit a crime.

The escape charge carries an additional five-year sentence, if convicted. The two also face a 10-year sentence and \$10,000 fine, if convicted on a grand larceny charge in Lowndes County in connection with an automobile theft following the escape.

Epps said his office is continuing to investigate the escape of two inmates last month at the private East Mississippi Correctional Facility in Lauderdale County.

Gregory Malone, 26, and Christopher Roy, 24, both serving

life sentences for murder, fled Oct. 17 and were captured about 24 hours later at a hotel in Northport, Ala., near Tuscaloosa.

Prison guard Tomeka Brown, 25, of Porterville, has been charged with two counts of accessory before the fact. She posted \$100,000 bond from the Lauderdale County jail.

Inmate Kenneth Nelson Johnson Jr., 23, who is serving a 7½-year sentence for a burglary conviction in Lawrence County, also was charged with two counts of accessory before the fact.

Lauderdale County Sheriff Billy Sollie said Wednesday he was unsure if charges will be presented against others relating to the inmates' escape.

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METRO EDITOR: GRACE SIMMONS FISHER (601) 961-7250 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2005 THE CLARION-LEDGER ■ CLARION-LEDGER.COM

Sheriff, Hinds supervisors duke it out yet again

Here we go again with another round of bickering between the Hinds County Board of Supervisors and Sheriff Melvin Melton. This war, which is subject to further during our lead next week, could easily be dubbed the week and a half Melton and his men versus the neighbors hood hooly.

In the most recent round, which involves around courtroom security, the fully whipped the week hooly and the happens.

The supervisor issued a contract with a private security guard after Melton claimed the agreement was illegal. The sheriff, who is charged with courthouse security, also several million that he was not consulted about the hiring. The sheriff's office indicated the guard's presence and security risk.

Even if Melton's contract is correct, his tactics were inappropriate.

Deputy preferred

The current bickering between Melton and supervisors was precipitated by a request from two Hinds County judges to improve security. This request is legitimate. Courtroom violence is a serious concern and Judge Clyde Chapman noted, "50 percent of every body who comes through there is angry."

Supervisors hired an armed security guard who happened to be a retired Jackson police officer. He was set to cost between \$17,000 and \$20,000, which is more than sufficient than having a deputy at an estimated \$20,000.

The sheriff, however, doesn't seem to care about using money. Nobody should blame him. The first thing they need to do is come and talk to us what they need to do and supplement my budget," he said.

The sheriff said he prefers putting a deputy in his courtroom, but he is unwilling to move a deputy from another assignment.

MSG&S news was more interested in adding another soldier to his army than in getting along with other officials or being fiscally responsible.

The sheriff should have been involved in the guard's hiring. But this wasn't even his first round, should not claim his judgment.

Debates frequent

Melton's bickering is understandable. He has 40,000 dependents mostly on the bond funds earmarked for five new prisons.

The two entities have fought over expanding the Hinds County Detention Center at Bay Springs, as well as the sheriff's management of the budget.

The debates have been so frequent that it's been difficult to keep score.

It is incredible that board members seemed uninterested about whether the private guard's hiring was consistent with state law. This sounds as if both the board and the board's attorney neglected to do their homework.

But the need for additional security seems valid. In voting to null the contract, this isn't going against. Only District 1 Supervisor Doug Anderson had the sense to stand his ground. Good for Anderson.

The sheriff and supervisors should sit down and work this out in a manner that best serves taxpayers. Based on what's been said so far, it would be best to hire a private guard as the best option. The sheriff should embrace this.

Melton's primary duty is a guard, but he shouldn't give his credibility where he can't like the neighborhood hooly.

To contact writer contact Melton at 601-961-7250 or e-mail melton@hindscounty.com.

'Allstate has no duty ... to defend or indemnify Defendant Melton' Firm fights libel payment

Company says actions involving link by former MEN chief intentional

By Andrew Campbell

Jackson Mayor Frank Melton's insurance company is asking a federal judge to rule it should not have to pay damages in a libel suit against Melton, in part, because he acknowledged the fact in court documents.

The lawsuit filed by Allstate Insurance Co., which represents one side of a legal dispute, argues that because Melton's actions were intentional, his policies with the company do not cover the damage he allegedly may have caused the defendant in the libel case.

Allstate has on Friday, filed a lawsuit with the judge in the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Jackson.

In April 2003, Melton, then director of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, gave an interview to News 3 anchor Ana Radtke, a Clarion-Ledger News Service reporter who serves as the Washington bureau correspondent for The Clarion-Ledger.

The Clarion-Ledger subsequently published her story based on its own facts.

The same question about the actions of government equipment and aircraft.

The two men filed a lawsuit asking the allegations were false and had caused them emotional distress.

The lawsuit was expanded to include assertions of libel and invasion of privacy.

In August, Lumberville County Circuit Court Judge Robert Bailey threw out Melton's response to the lawsuit after Melton admitted to lying in court documents for more than two years when he admitted lying in the news. Bailey entered a judgment in favor of Pierce and Melton.

A trial on damages is set for Aug. 3. At issue now is whether Melton was lying within the scope of his government position.

If so, damages will be capped at \$500,000, and the state will pay according to the Mississippi Tort Claims Act.

Melton is found personally liable, the law is 1 percent of Melton's net worth.

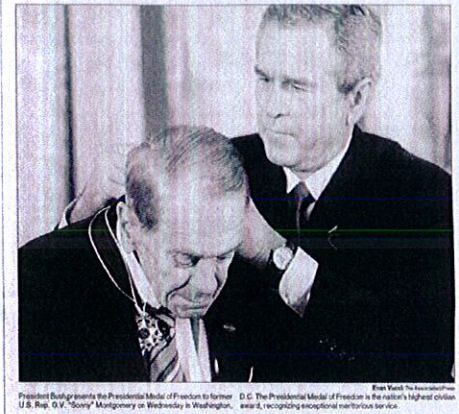
Bailey has not decided the issue, but he has set a date of October at the request of Melton's attorney.

Clayton, the former Melton's attorney, said that, which would not concern Melton.

Melton's attorney did not return phone calls Wednesday. And William Collins, Bailey's attorney, also would be reached.

See ST-11, B1

Montgomery honored



President Bush presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to former U.S. Rep. O'Henry "Sonny" Montgomery on Wednesday in Washington, D.C. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation's highest civilian award, recognizing exceptional meritorious service.

Greenwood runoff set after votes disallowed

David Jordan will meet George Ellis Jr.; date to be decided by governor

GREENWOOD — The state Court of Appeals has ordered a runoff for Greenwood County Circuit Court and after some votes for incumbent David Jordan were disallowed and counted out.

Following the votes took away Jordan's margin of victory in the June 7 election, Jordan and his opponent, George Ellis Jr., under the order handed down Tuesday by Court of Appeals Presiding Judge Joe Lee, Ellis had challenged Jordan's victory.

Gov. Haley's order will set a date for the runoff, but spokeswoman Faye Smith said the governor's Jordan office had not yet received a copy of Lee's order.

Ellis said the ruling gives him a chance to get on Jordan again, which this time is a more competitive two-candidate race instead of the three-prong contest in June. "I'm glad. We've got a chance to move forward," Ellis said.

Jordan, who also serves in the state Senate, said he won't appeal Lee's order. "I don't have anything to say except that I am a lawmaker and I am willing to change," he said.

Ellis' attorney Jim Collins III of Greenwood said Jordan, who took the oath of office in July, will continue serving on the City Council. "There he takes the oath of office, the court can vacate the election, but he can remain in office" pending the results of the runoff, Collins said.

Counted results of the June 7 election show 411 for Jordan and 214 votes for Ellis. Of 108 votes and 28 votes for Ellis, 108 percent plus one vote margin of victory, and he has a runoff scheduled on a voting machine that had not been cleared before the opening of the polls. Lee also ruled an absentee ballot cast by a voter was questionable since the poll books showed the same voter had cast a ballot by machine.

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A maintenance supervisor and his assistant were terminated. Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner Christian Epps said Wednesday.

"They didn't follow procedure," Epps said. "They left some keys in a common area."

Epps wouldn't name the fired employees.

On Sept. 18, inmates Tony Robinson and James "Sista" escaped. They were captured about a week later at a residence in Natchitoches, La.

Investigation with the state Department of Corrections found keys with the U.S. Marshals Service in Louisiana and sheriff's deputies from Choctaw Parish, Monroe Parish and Natchitoches in capturing the escapees without incident.

Epps said escape charges were added to their sentences.

Robinson was serving a 20-year sentence for aggravated assault and drive by shooting. Sista was serving a three-year sentence for possession of percutaneous and dangerous weapons.

The escape charge carries an additional five-year sentence, if convicted. The two also face a 10-year sentence and \$50,000 fine if convicted on a grand larceny charge in Lumberville County in connection with an automobile theft following the escape.

Epps said his office is continuing to investigate the escape of two inmates last month at the private East Mississippi Correctional Facility in Lumberville County.

Gregory Malone, 26, and Christopher Ross, 34, both serving life sentences for murder, did not. 17 and were captured about 14 hours later at a North Port, Ala., near Tallapoosa.

Prison guard Tankisha Brown, 33, of Pattersonville, has been charged with two counts of assault before the fact. She posted a \$100,000 bond from the Lumberville County Jail.

Inmate Kenneth Nelson Johnson, 23, who is serving a 7½-year sentence for a burglary conviction in Lawrence County, also was charged with two counts of assault before the fact.

Lumberville County Sheriff Douglas Sells said Wednesday he was unsure if charges will be pressed against others relating to the inmate's escape.

12 snared in metro-area methamphetamine raids

Suspects are being held at Rankin County Detention Center

By Linda Holsh

Law enforcement officers arrested 12 people Wednesday in an alleged Jackson metro-area methamphetamine ring.

More than two pounds of "ice," a smokable form of methamphetamine, and \$35,000 were seized, according to a statement from the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, the agency who led the 18-month investigation.

This week, officers arrested 12 people in Tippah County and 19 people in Calhoun County.

County on drug-related charges.

Rankin County Sheriff Marshall Fisher said more arrests are planned.

Fisher said many of the arrests in the metro area were made at the suspect's homes while others surrendered to local agencies. Some of the suspects had indictments while others had justice court arrest warrants.

"One broke down on I-55 right off the street from MSN," Fisher said of a suspect who was caught with more than four grams of meth.

The suspects are being held at the Rankin County Detention Center.

See B1ST, B3

Twelve people were arrested Wednesday in an alleged metro-area methamphetamine ring. The identity of the 12th suspect was not revealed. Those charged and the charges they face were:

■ **Barrett C. Upton, 50**, of Poplarville, 1 count possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute.

■ **Philip G. Winstead, 48**, of Florence, 2 counts of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count possession of methamphetamine, 1 count conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine.

■ **Blaine Scales, 49**, of Jackson, 1 count possession of methamphetamine.

■ **Wille C. Hunter, 51**, of Osyka, 1 count sale of methamphetamine, 1 count conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine.

■ **James Johnson, 52**, of Florence, 1 count sale of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

■ **Shady C. Adams, 59**, of Pearl, 1 count transfer of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of methamphetamine.

■ **David Emery, 42**, of Terry, 1 count conspiracy to transfer cocaine.

■ **Wille L. Durrant, 60**, of Poplarville, 4 counts of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count of conspiracy to possess a controlled substance.

■ **Wendell W. Payton, 41**, of Brandon, 1 count of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 2 counts sale of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, 1 count possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute.

■ **William B. Shorter, 41**, of Brandon, 1 count conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count conspiracy to possess methamphetamine.

■ **Tan Hester, 28**, of Brandon, 1 count conspiracy before the fact to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine.

■ **Wendell W. Payton, 41**, of Brandon, 1 count of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 2 counts sale of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, 1 count possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute.

■ **Shady C. Adams, 59**, of Pearl, 1 count transfer of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of methamphetamine.

■ **David Emery, 42**, of Terry, 1 count conspiracy to transfer cocaine.

■ **Wille L. Durrant, 60**, of Poplarville, 4 counts of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count of conspiracy to possess a controlled substance.

■ **James Johnson, 52**, of Florence, 1 count sale of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

■ **Shady C. Adams, 59**, of Pearl, 1 count transfer of methamphetamine, 1 count possession of methamphetamine.

■ **David Emery, 42**, of Terry, 1 count conspiracy to transfer cocaine.

■ **Wille L. Durrant, 60**, of Poplarville, 4 counts of conspiracy to transfer methamphetamine, 1 count of conspiracy to possess a controlled substance.