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Idaho Supreme Court hears appeal in Crookham case

Woman died working the assembly line for the seed company

By EMILY LOWE
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BOISE — Idaho Supreme Court justice heard arguments Friday on an appeal filed by a family who in 2016 lost their loved one to a work accident at Crookham Company in Caldwell.

On Jan. 20, 2016, Francesca R. Gomez, of Parma, 63, died after her hair was caught in an assembly line, scalping her and causing asphyxiation. Gomez was an employee at the seed company and was at a packing table machine when the accident occurred.

In July 2016, the family filed a lawsuit against the Crookham Company for Gomez's death in the 3rd District Court, claiming negligence, failure to train of the potential dangers of the packing table and wrongful death. The family asked for damages in excess of \$10,000, among other demands.

The district dismissed all of the family's claims in October 2017. The family appealed that decision, and in December, the Idaho Supreme Court upheld the 3rd District Court's ruling.

Kerim Duman with Duman & Associates in Nampa, who represents the Gomez family in the matter, filed a petition for a rehearing to determine whether Crookham Company did commit an "unprovoked physical aggression" against Gomez "by consciously disregarding knowledge that her injury would occur."

The Idaho Supreme Court heard those arguments Friday in Boise.

LOCAL

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Former Columbia coach arrested

Helmandollar accused of soliciting prescription drugs, misleading police before Amber Alert investigation

By IDAHO PRESS STAFF
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NAMPA — The recently resigned football coach at Columbia High School was arrested Friday on charges of solicitation to deliver a controlled substance and obstructing an officer, according to a Nampa Police press release.

Ian Helmandollar resigned May 23, the Idaho Press previously reported. He was part of a police investigation in March after his wife, Brooke Helmandollar, left the state with their 16-year-old daughter, according to police, prompting an Amber Alert.

Police found Brooke Helmandollar and the girl in Cheney, Washington, after receiving a phone tip. The girl was unharmed.

Brooke Helmandollar was charged with criminal restraint after police say she pleaded to strip her daughter with Helms, according to the Spokesman-Review. According to a probable cause affidavit, Brooke Helmandollar had made comments to a school counselor in March that her daughter was involved with prostitutes and was trying to treat the prostitutes by having her daughter drink charcoal and possibly schizosaric enemas.



Helmandollar

LOCAL

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Veteran looks to Risch to pull Idaho troops from Middle East



Veteran Dan McKnight is leading efforts in Idaho to bring troops home from the Middle East. McKnight stands in front of his home in Meridian on June 4, with a photo of himself during his time in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Risch holds power on the foreign relations and intelligence senate committees

By RILEY BUNCH
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MERIDIAN — Meridian resident Dan McKnight, 43, has two children in their 20s who could theoretically serve in the same war he did, he said. That doesn't sit well with him.

McKnight is a veteran of 13 years, who served in the Idaho National Guard for 10 years. From 2005 through 2007, he was among the first combat units deployed to Afghanistan — the early years of the war.

McKnight is spearheading the surge in local activism aimed at bringing troops home from the Middle East. The efforts are directed at U.S. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, who holds power on Senate foreign relations and intelligence committees.

"I am going to take a shot," McKnight said. "I am tired of seeing my 20-year-old son get deployed over and over again. Some of my closest friends have been deployed four or five times."

McKnight founded the Bring Our Troops Home organization in January, after Risch was appointed chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The goal is to get Congress to pull troops out of the Middle East and bring them home.

LOOKING TO RISCH

When McKnight was in Afghanistan in 2006, his group was having a hard time getting supplies. He did the only thing he could think of doing — he called Risch, who was governor at the time, and asked for help.

"He went to work for us. In six weeks, we had supplies within 48 hours," McKnight said. "I have kind of held him on a pedestal ever since."

McKnight was injured in Afghanistan and returned home to Idaho in February 2007. He was medically retired in August of that year. He said his time in the Middle East disillusioned him. He isn't consistently concerned territory, then often turned it back over to those they were fighting.

On Feb. 21, McKnight attended the Boise Metro Chamber constituent luncheon where Risch was addressing Idaho stakeholders. McKnight stood

up in front of the room and asked the senator if he supported the cause to bring troops home.

"It's with you," Risch said. "We cannot and will not be the world's policeman."

McKnight thought his job was done, he said, but over the next three months, Risch noted a trend of keeping troops in Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen.

On Feb. 4, Risch voted in favor of an amendment to the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act of 2019 that will prevent withdrawal of troops from Syria and Afghanistan. On March 13, Risch voted against a bipartisan resolution to pull American troops

from Yemen not authorized by Congress, and then again on May 1 he voted against overruling the president's veto of that resolution.

In response to request for comment on the vote, a Risch spokeswoman directed the Idaho Press to two press releases. Risch cited support for allies in his vote on the Strengthening America's Security act, and that U.S. troops are providing "critical non-combat support" in "situations that is necessary."

The Strengthening America's Security act also put economic pressure on the Assad regime and those "responsible for the tragic loss of half a million lives and ongoing atrocities" in Syria, Risch said in a statement.

McKnight said he understands why Risch does it, but each vote against the cause pushes McKnight to continue advocating.

"I understand his rationale. Each one of those votes puts the leader of his party, President Trump, in a position of limited ability to do his job," McKnight said. "And that's where I struggle because I agree. But limiting his power is what the Constitution does, and that's why we have these checks on the government."

Risch said the Idaho Press on May 31 that there won't be large deployments to the Middle East "short of some very catastrophic event that is unforeseeable at this time."

"First of all, the number of troops that we have there now is minuscule compared to what we've had in the past — and as long as Donald Trump is president, the conviction that it is

going to stay that way," Risch said. "I'm skilled to learn as much on this issue, and he is always reluctant to comment based on the ground to these kinds of things."

CONGRESS' RESPONSIBILITY

Several leaders on Idaho have signed on to support McKnight's cause, including Lt. Gov. Justice McGeachin, Rep. Tommy Nicholas, R-Middleton, and Larry LaRocco, a former Democratic state representative. LaRocco has run against Risch in lieutenant governor and Senate campaigns.

In April, Boise State Young Democrats and Boise State College Republicans came together to host a meeting to discuss how to bring troops home.

"This is not a Republican issue; it's not a Democratic issue. It's an American issue," Pryor Robinson, former Boise State College Republican chairman, told the Idaho Press.

The bipartisan support stems from the idea that the Constitution gives Congress the power to authorize the use of troops and to check the executive branch — which the group feels hasn't been happening.

"Right now, we are faced with a security issue because we are engaged in countries around the world that haven't been approved by Congress," Robinson said. "If you look at the way our current government and Congress is going about declaring these conflicts, they are pushing a lot of power up to the executive, and it's their duty to struggle it back."

The issue of troops in the Middle East, LaRocco said, "transcends party affiliation."

"I think that Congress sort of turned its authority on its ear, possibly to the administration over period of years," LaRocco said. "Quite frankly, I feel that (Risch) has turned over the management of the committee to (retired security adviser) John Bolton and the administration, and that he is not really fulfilling the proper role of oversight by Congress."

Keeping the balance in an era where legislation is motivated by the hyperpartisan atmosphere — as often described by Idaho's federal delegates no matter — isn't easy.

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