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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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GUNMAN DEAD AFTER HOURS LONG STANDOFF

Neighbors said man had been squatting in Garfield home since March



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Police prepare to deploy a piece of equipment known as a "rook" as they respond to the active shooter situation in Garfield on Wednesday.



Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Children are escorted out of the Community Preschool & Nursery on Penn Avenue during Wednesday's standoff.

By Megan Guza, Mike Wereschagin and Jordan Anderson
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Thousands of rounds of gunfire tore through Pittsburgh's Garfield neighborhood Wednesday after an attempt by sheriff's deputies to serve an eviction notice at a Broad Street home erupted into violence and a day-long SWAT standoff with the man inside.

The man who allegedly sparked the six-hour standoff, William Hardison Jr., was dead by the end of it. One sheriff's deputy was injured when he dove to avoid gunfire during the first moments of the incident.

Police and neighbors said Hardison is the brother of the

Inside

• More photos as Wednesday's incident unfolded, **Page A-6**

former owner of the home, which was sold to a limited liability corporation in February. He'd allegedly been squatting there since March.

For hours, volleys of gunfire sent residents scrambling for safety in their own homes.

About 10 a.m., Leslie Thompson heard a commotion outside. She peeked through her window at the home across the street — 4817 Broad St. — and saw about a half-dozen deputies and a man in civilian clothes knocking on the door.

SEE **STANDOFF**, PAGE A-7

Esmark out in fight for U.S. Steel

Union doesn't support \$7.8B bid for rival firm

By Evan Robinson-Johnson
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Esmark Inc. said Wednesday that it has dropped its bid for U.S. Steel Corp. out of respect for the United Steelworkers, the union that has exclusively supported rival bidder Cleveland-Cliffs.

"The USW was our partner in the successful acquisition of Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel, and we remain close with them," Esmark CEO Jim Bouchard said in a prepared statement.

Sewickley-based Esmark went public with an all-cash offer valued at about \$7.8 billion on Aug. 14, the day after Ohio-based Cleveland-Cliffs disclosed that it had the USW's backing in a \$7.3 billion proposal to take over the rival Pittsburgh steel-maker.

Esmark did not explain the timing of its decision to pull out of the bidding, given that the USW's loyalty to Cleveland-Cliffs had been known since Aug. 13. That's when Cleveland-Cliffs released a letter that the Pittsburgh-based union

SEE **STEEL**, PAGE A-12

Giuliani released on bond

Charged with Trump in Ga. vote fraud case

By Kate Brumbach
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Rudy Giuliani, Donald Trump's lawyer and confidant, turned himself in at a jail in Atlanta on Wednesday on charges related to efforts to overturn then-President Trump's loss in the 2020 presidential election in Georgia.



Giuliani

The former New York mayor, was indicted last week along with Mr. Trump and 17 others. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis said they participated in a wide-ranging conspiracy to subvert the will of the voters after the Republican president lost to Democrat Joe Biden in November 2020.

SEE **GIULIANI**, PAGE A-2

Russia: Prigozhin presumed dead after plane crash

By Dasha Litvinova
Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia —Mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, who led a brief armed rebellion against the Russian military earlier this year, was presumed dead Wednesday after a plane crash north of Moscow that killed all 10 people on board.

The crash immediately raised suspicions since the fate of the founder of the Wagner private



Prigozhin

bellion as "treason" and a "stab in the back" and vowed to avenge it. But the charges against Mr. Prigozhin were soon dropped. The

military company has been the subject of intense speculation ever since he mounted the mutiny.

At the time, President Vladimir Putin denounced the rebellion as "treason" and a "stab in the back" and vowed to avenge it. But the charges against Mr. Prigozhin were soon dropped. The

Wagner chief, whose troops were some of the best fighting forces for Russia in Ukraine, was allowed to retreat to Belarus, while reportedly popping up in Russia from time to time.

The crash also comes after Russian media reported that a top general linked to Mr. Prigozhin was dismissed from his position as commander of the air force.

A plane carrying three pilots and seven passengers that was en

route from Moscow to St. Petersburg went down almost 185 miles north of the capital, according to officials cited by Russia's state news agency Tass.

Russia's civilian aviation agency, Rosaviatsia, quickly reported that he was on the manifest and later said that, according to the airline, he was indeed on board.

Earlier, Vladimir Rogov, a

SEE **PRIGOZHIN**, PAGE A-9



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Warmer; showers and a heavy t-storm. Daytime high, 86; tonight's low, 71.
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Gunman dead after intense standoff in Garfield



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh police and other law enforcement respond to an active shooter situation Wednesday in Garfield.



Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh police Chief Larry Sciroto speaks after Pittsburgh police and other law enforcement agencies responded to the standoff in the Garfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh. The situation ended when police found the suspect dead at the scene.



Teagan Staudenmeier/Post-Gazette

Tear gas is deployed into the suspect's home.



Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette

Residents are evacuated from Broad Street in Garfield, while the standoff with a gunman was still active.



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh police use armored equipment to protect themselves as they move along Broad Street.



Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Police speak with a person who said he is the nephew of the person involved in the active shooter situation.



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Police deploy a robot to enter the home and search for the suspect.



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Members of the Allegheny County SWAT team position themselves near the home.

Gunman dead after intense standoff in Garfield

GUNMAN HAD REFUSED TO LEAVE GARFIELD HOME

STANDOFF, FROM A-1

They knocked for more than half an hour, she said, calling for the man inside to come out.

They eventually forced their way inside. That's when the shooting started: staccato bangs that sent Ms. Thompson rushing to her basement. She stayed down there for two hours. During each lull in the firefight, she began to creep upstairs, hoping she could get out and away from danger.

"Every time I tried to come up, it would be a barrage of gunfire," she said, and each time she fled back to her basement shelter.

A few blocks away on Dearborn Street, Shay Howard-Hraniotis was on a Zoom call when police knocked on her door. They escorted her outside and told her to stay away from the area. She worried about her two dogs and one cat that she had to leave behind.

She was able to rescue the pets from her home shortly after 1 p.m.

On the same street, Tom Yocum Jr. told his father he thought he heard shots shortly before 11 a.m. His 64-year-old father went to the porch and heard the same barrage that sent Ms. Thompson to her basement.

A plainclothes man on the street told him he had been part of an eviction team that encountered the gunman, who was wearing "full body armor" and firing at them, the elder Mr. Yocum said.

"I went inside and took cover," Mr. Yocum said.

A block away, the hours ticked by as Ms. Thompson hunkered in her basement, praying and waiting for an all-clear that "never took place." Eventually, a team of six shield-carrying officers clad in body armor knocked in her door and escorted her away from the firefight.

Neighbors said they were wary of the man who had been holed up in the home, some going so far as to say they were terrified of him. Several said he'd been bringing cans of gasoline into the home over the past several weeks. They said it wasn't for a lawnmower — he didn't own one.

Hardison was formally evicted from the property in May, according to Andrew Gross, an attorney for the corporation that bought the property. The company, 907 East Street, was rehabbing homes in the area to resell.

Property records show 907 East Street bought the property on Broad Street for \$25,000 on Feb. 2. The previous owner was Joseph Hardison, who bought the property in 1998.

Allegheny County property records as of January show that the company owns at least four other properties.

Mr. Gross said Hardison had received an eviction notice and "he was well aware of what was going on."

He said the man never showed up at any court proceedings. The sheriff's office was involved in getting Hardison out of the house, he said, because of his "violent reputation."

But Jackie Lane said she knew he wouldn't leave without putting up a fight.

Ms. Lane lives on Broad Street, too. She shares a wall with the home Hardison was holed up in. She said he'd been squatting in the townhome next to hers for some time — he'd gone in through a broken window.

"He was just the person that people wouldn't want to be around if they didn't have to be," she said.

She called police in March and, recently, the owners of the limited liability corporation that bought the home came by to get more information.

A photo taken by those owners showed handwritten notes all over the front door of the townhome.

"Not for sale."
"William Hardison live (sic) here."

"No trespassing."
Ms. Lane called him belligerent, loud and obnoxious.

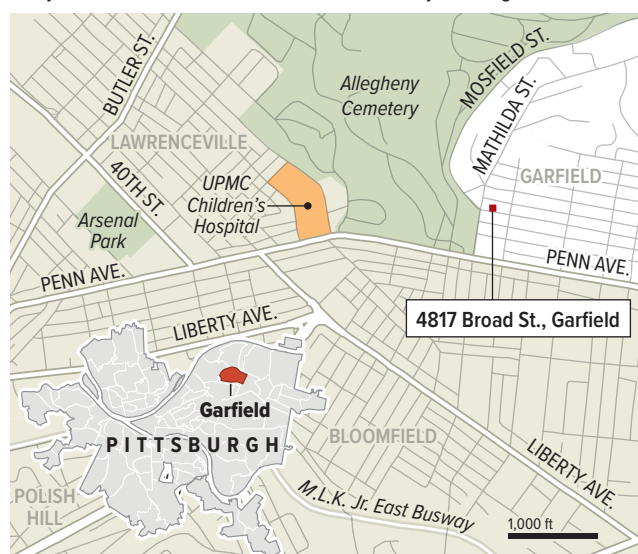
"We knew for sure he would not peacefully leave, because he's just not a nice



The front door of 4817 Broad St. in Garfield, where police responded to an active shooter situation on Wednesday. The alleged gunman's body was found inside shortly after 5 p.m.

Garfield shooting and SWAT incident

Authorities said a suspect began shooting at law enforcement as they tried to serve an eviction notice Wednesday morning.



Source: Esri

Post-Gazette

person," she said. "But none of us thought of this."

That's not how others knew Hardison, though.

"Dude's always been good to everybody," said Michael Pennix, a longtime friend of the gunman.

He said Hardison was a veteran and considered himself to be a sovereign citizen — a belief that the government has little, if any, authority over individuals. Those beliefs led to several run-ins between police and Hardison and even a meeting with Mayor Ed Gainey last year.

Standing just blocks from where his friend had died, Mr. Pennix said Hardison had lost close family members in recent years, had been diagnosed with cancer in recent months, and he'd been dealing with mental health issues.

"This is sad," he said. "This is a hurtful day."

As the hours dragged on, family members gathered outside. They begged for Hardison to come out, and they begged for police not to kill him. Some neighbors referred to Hardison as "Mr. Bill."

Marlene Jones knew him as her cousin's boyfriend of 40 years. She, too, said he'd been battling cancer and his mental health had been in a "downward spiral."

She said she was shocked by the situation — it's not the "gentle Bill" she knew.

"He wasn't like this. He's really unstable now, and he's never been violent," Ms. Jones said. "When it's someone you don't know, it's scary, but we know Bill. He's sick."

She said she and other family members had been calling Hardison's phone all morning and afternoon.

"We're leaving him messages, letting him know we're here, we love you, to come out of the house," she said. "He just feels like everything has been taken from him."

Sheriff Kevin Kraus said law enforcement officers gave Hardison every opportunity to surrender.

"We tried talking to him, tried to bring him out to talk to him, implemented dialogue that was unsuccessful."

Seven deputies went to the townhome to effect the

eviction because "pre-event meetings" led them to believe they might need increased manpower. Things changed drastically once they made contact with Hardison.

"We certainly didn't expect this," Sheriff Kraus said. "We had no information whatsoever that this individual was this dangerous or that there were firearms in the house."

Hundreds of officers from Pittsburgh police, Allegheny County police, state police and the sheriff's office responded to the scene.

"I can't even tell you the number of volleys of gunfire back and forth," Sheriff Kraus said. "He had a lot of ammunition in the house."

The active shooting situation shut down a large swath of Garfield and its surrounding neighborhoods. The home on Broad Street — just off of North Mathilda — is near Allegheny Cemetery and about a half mile from UPMC Children's Hospital in the busy Penn Avenue corridor.

Nearby West Penn Hospital went into "controlled access" operations as a precaution, but security was allowing people in and out through a metal detector. Children's Hospital increased security on its campus.

Parents whose children attend the Community Preschool and Nursery on Penn Avenue waited hours to pick up their children.

Among them was Nyiah Ryan, who carried her toddler daughter close as she darted through the rain. She had waited since 11 a.m. to pick up the 2-year-old.

"They kept in contact with us throughout the whole ordeal, so when you're in a panic, they made you feel a little bit at ease," she said. "Because they were taking care of the kids, so that makes me feel good."

Initially, the parents got a call that they could pick her up at 4 p.m. Then, gunshots started again, so the center told them they had to continue waiting. It was agonizing for the worried parents who'd already had to evacuate their home about a block away from the shooting scene.

"I'm just glad to have her now," she said, with her

daughter nestled into her shoulder in a hooded black jacket.

Brenna Upholster and her boyfriend, Calvin Buerkle, stood on Penn Avenue near South Mathilda after gunshots and sirens drew them out of their nearby home. The first shots didn't worry them initially. As more and more police vehicles flooded their neighborhood, they grew concerned.

"They kept coming and then we hear all the helicopters and then you're like, 'That's not a hospital helicopter,'" Ms. Upholster said.

The couple walked to Penn Avenue and South Mathilda around 11:30 a.m., where police, FBI, Homeland Security and other law enforcement vehicles had taken over the intersection. Over the course of two hours, they heard multiple exchanges of gunfire.

During the first rounds,

they took cover behind a tree; they didn't know where they suspects were coming from.

"You can kind of hear what you assume is the suspect and then the retaliation," she said, as more shots rang out at around 1:30 p.m. "It seems like it takes forever. That was easily 30 seconds."

Shortly after 5 p.m., city police announced that they had found Mr. Hardison's body inside the townhome. Investigators had not said how he died.

About 6 p.m., Mr. Gainey released a statement, asking residents to pray for Garfield, "a peaceful neighborhood that was home to an unfortunate tragedy today."

Police had deployed drones and armored equipment throughout the morning and afternoon. Pittsburgh police Chief Larry

Sciroto said the combined efforts of the responding officers saved lives.

He called it a tense, rapid, uncertain situation.

"I don't think anything about this incident was normal in that these are environments we train for but don't ever expect to occur," Chief Sciroto said. "However, we were very prepared for the threat that we faced."

He said the situation was drawn out for hours as officers tried to effect a surrender.

"We don't rush to judgment. We want a peaceful conclusion," he said. "With every opportunity to surrender, we were met with gunfire."

Reporters Kris Mamula, Steve Bohnel and Michael Korsh contributed to this report.



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