

Home / News / State and Regional News / Montana News

APF spokesperson holds emotional press conference; lawyer quits project

- Story
- Discussion
- Video

TOM LUTEY Of The Gazette Staff | Posted: Friday, October 2, 2009 7:40 pm | (115) Comments

Font Size:

Default font size

Larger font size



Buy this photo

Gazette Staff

American Police Force spokesperson Becky Shay holds a press conference to discuss the controversies that arisen around the deal between American Police Force and the Two River Authority.

Related Video



APF addresses affect on Hardin community

American Police Force public relations director Becky Shay talks about how the controversy surrounding the American Police Force is affecting the Hardin community.

A sobbing spokeswoman for the secretive company occupying the Hardin jail welcomed an investigation by Montana's attorney general Friday and expressed concerns for her own safety amid rumors about her company.

Becky Shay, in a 45-minute, wide-ranging press conference during which she occasionally broke into tears, said the California-based American Police Force welcomed an information request made Thursday by Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock.

Meanwhile, an attorney involved in the project cut ties with APF Friday and a second company, once named as a subcontractor, denied any involvement.

Shay said she hadn't been formally served papers by the attorney general, who said he is concerned that APF might be violating the Montana Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act. APF has reached a multimillion-dollar agreement with Hardin's economic development arm, Two Rivers Authority, to run the empty Hardin jail, built two years ago to house inmates under contract. She said she had read of Bullock's request in the news media.

Shay mentioned the attorney general's request almost as a two-minute side note in a press conference that revealed that the former Billings Gazette reporter and new face of APF fears for her safety.

"A lot of work I've done has been to calm down or at least try to counteract comments from people I consider to be fear mongers," Shay said. "What has happened in the interim, however, is those people's friends around the nation have been in contact with me or tried to access me. I realize I'm being pretty vague so that we don't support or incite these people. I don't want my words to be taken out of context to further inflame the tensions that I'm working under."

At that point, Shay began to cry. She asked TV media at the conference to turn their cameras off because, she said, "it's important to me that I do not appear as vulnerable as I feel."

APF officials, who rolled into Hardin last week in three black, Mercedes sport utility vehicles bearing faux police insignia and no license plates, have since departed, leaving Shay as the company's lone point of contact for all comers, including those reading dire motives into APF's insistent secrecy.

Shay said APF front man Michael Hilton plans to return to Hardin for a two-day job fair beginning Oct. 12.

Specifically, Shay mentioned Internet radio personality Alex Jones, of Austin, Texas. Jones, of infowars.com, was in Hardin on Thursday reporting on APF. Government and corporate takeovers of society are hot topics on Infowars. Jones indicated the Hardin situation was an example of the possibility of government or corporate takeover of a rural area.

Jones said Hardin's story involved a convicted felon, Hilton, landing in the middle of nowhere and taking over a large jail capable of serving a city of several hundred thousand people. The facility, empty since it was constructed roughly two years ago, has room for more than 464 beds.

Gov. Brian Schweitzer on Friday dismissed the notion of any secretive government scheme.

"I think a low-level card shark is not going to rise to the level to get some kind of government defense contract," the governor said.

Many of Jones' concerns about APF were no different than ones raised by the local press. He questioned the credibility of Hilton, a felon with 17 aliases, who has filed for bankruptcy and faces multiple fraud accusations in the California civil courts. And he questioned whether California-based APF was truly a private government contractor and security force as it suggests, but provides no supporting evidence.

Shay said alternative media reports sparked rumors that APF was stopping motorists in Big Horn County and ticketing them for not wearing seat belts. Earlier in the week, rumors stirred that APF had barricaded Hardin and wouldn't let anyone in or out.

The Two Rivers Port Authority, Hardin's economic development arm and the agency responsible for contracting the jail to APF, posted this message on its Web site earlier in the week:

"We welcome anyone to visit our town! There are no commandos in the streets. There is no fence or gate being built around Hardin. People are free to come and go as they please. APF is not running our town or our police force."

Hardin Mayor Ron Adams said Friday that despite his reservations about the project, he would still like to see it go forward so the jail can be filled.

Shay said the secrecy surrounding the APF - which has provided no information about its principles but suggests that it combats terrorism worldwide and performs everything from cruise ship security to covert pregnancy tests - has caused distractions interrupting everyday business in Hardin. Storekeepers take as many as 60 calls a day from outsiders wanting information about APF and the Hardin jail, Shay said.

If APF and Two Rivers don't reveal their information to the attorney general, they could face contempt charges, according to Bullock's office.

Maziar Mafi, a lawyer from Santa Ana, Calif., who served as the legal affairs director for American Police Force, said he wanted to see the project begin to move forward before he could continue his involvement.

"For the time, I'm pulling out," Mafi said. "I need to see more concrete action before I can be involved."

Mafi's involvement began last month. Hilton, who claims an extensive military background and uses the title "captain," initially described Mafi as a "major" in American Police Force. He later said Mafi was the company's president - although Mafi denied the role and said he had no military or security background.

Hilton also had claimed Allied Defense Systems would provide the uniforms for guards at the jail. On Sept. 30, an attorney for the Irvine company sent a letter to Hilton threatening a lawsuit over the use of the company's name.

Edward Angelino, chief executive of Allied Defense Systems, an Irvine, Calif.-based defense contractor, said his company met with Hilton.

"We checked his background, we checked his company. He's not an adequate person to do business

with," Angelino said.

Shay said she was unaware of the move by Allied Defense Systems and had not spoken with Mafi directly.

Mafi guaranteed the Sept. 10 purchase of two Mercedes SUVs by Hilton as part of his plans for the jail. They were among three Mercedes that Hilton brought to Montana last week, saying he intended to turn over to Hardin for use by law enforcement.

A financing payment on at least one of the vehicles is now overdue.

Only one Mercedes remains in Montana. It's being driven by Shay, who said Friday that she intends to register it soon.

Associated Press reporter Matthew Brown contributed to this story.

Posted in Montana, Top-headlines on *Friday, October 2, 2009 7:40 pm* Updated: 7:51 pm. | Tags: Becky Shay, Steve Bullock, American Police Force,

Share This Story

Print Email ShareThis

Super Cheap Car Insurance

Get Discount Car Insurance Quotes Online – Rates from \$15 / Month.

Discount-Car-Insurance-Rates.com

Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance

(\$200,000 Refinance under \$1,059/mo) See Rates - No Credit Check Req.

SeeRefinanceRates.com

Obama Asks Moms to Return to School

Get Your Degree Now. Financial Aid & Scholarships are available.

www.ClassesUSA.com

Ads by Yahoo!

Latest Similar Stories

- "Game Balls"
- Teens slam car into Lake Elmo mailbox
- Greece's new leader is a low-key veteran pol
- Broadway performance canceled when actor falls ill
- Red Sox playoff starters Lester, Beckett, Buchholz
- Two men seriously injured in I-90 rollover
- 8 US troops killed in fierce Afghan fighting
- Jamaican rapper Bounty Killer barred from Trinidad

Popular Stories

- APF head Hilton has history of legal trouble
- Woman dies when car, motorcycle collide
- Chase ends in fatal crash
- Prayers of Billings couple answered in winning drawing for dream home
- Questions swirling around jail deal
- APF spokesperson holds emotional press conference; lawyer quits project
- Battered for so long, Hardin has high hopes
- Challenger alleges Rehberg drunk when he boarded boat



The Right Choice.

Mike Oliver

Daryl Beam

Cheryl Burows

 Prudential
Floberg REALTORS®

A horizontal banner with a blue background and a yellow curved line on the right side. It features three headshots of realtors: Mike Oliver, Daryl Beam, and Cheryl Burows. To the right of the headshots is the text 'The Right Choice.' and the Prudential logo with 'Prudential Floberg REALTORS®' below it.