

School gun battle claims girl's life

By B. RONALD GALLEGOS

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St. Vincent Hospital officials said Linda Montoya, 19, died from a hemorrhage believed caused by a bullet which lodged at the base of her brain.

Following Miss Montoya's death, Santa Fe Dist. Atty. Jose Cruz Castellano requested an autopsy and recovery of the bullet. Castellano said he has asked the New Mexico Medical Examiner to perform the autopsy.

According to Castellano, the X-rays taken of Miss Montoya revealed the bullet appeared to be of a small caliber, possibly a .22.

Miss Montoya was one of four persons, including two Santa Fe Police officers, who were wounded during the gunbattle at Escuela Colegio Tonantzin in the village of Agua Fria west of the Capital City.

Approximately 16 members of El Comite de los Barrios exchanged gunfire with police after Santa Fe Police Officer Manuel Moya was allegedly wounded by a group member.

Police said Moya was wounded while attempting to arrest an alleged member following a hit and run accident which resulted in a high speed chase. Police said the chase ended when the suspect's vehicle struck a tree in the driveway at the school.

Police said two passengers fled the hit and run suspect's vehicle and ran into the school. Gunshots reportedly from the school wounded Moya and forced officers to seek cover behind their police cars.

During the gun battle, Miss Montoya, and Jose Morfin were wounded as law enforcement officers directed a steady barrage of gunfire into the building. Another Santa Fe Police officer Robert Holland received a bullet wound in the abdomen during the gun battle which lasted approximately three hours. Occupants of the building were forced to surrender after tear gas was fired into the building.

Eleven members of the group were arrested as they fled the building. Charges of assault with intent to commit a violent felony were filed against the 11 members in Santa Fe Magistrate Court Tuesday.

The day after the gun battle, the school was occupied by law enforcement officers who conducted a thorough search of the property and buildings. Three pistols and two rifles were discovered in a building under construction at the school. Another

rifle, police said was found in the vehicle which was pursued by officers.

Following the incident, residents of the Village of Agua Fria met and organized a committee to seek legal means to have the school evicted from the village. The group also met with the District Attorney to request aid in the eviction.

In addition, the committee sent a plea to the Catholic Apostolic Delegate in Washington D.C. to aid the village with the eviction. Thursday, the committee issued a second plea to the Apostolic Delegate to step into the controversy raging over the location of the school which is operated by a militant Chicano group in the community.

Escuela Colegio Tonantzin Inc., is operating the school in the former convent which was turned over to the group by Santa Fe Archbishop James Peter Davis. It was learned the village also sought possession of the convent property, for use as a community center.

According to Steve Pike, a member of the Agua Fria committee, the second telegram has been sent to the Rev. Jedot and renews the plea for assistance.

The second telegram reads:

"Chicano militants still occupy the convent given them by the Archbishop of Santa Fe. Please can you do something?"

"Lives are at stake and the good name of the Catholic Church in this part of the country."

"Our children are in danger and the lives of our people. We appeal to you and to the Holy Father to step into the matter before there is a tragic loss of life."

The letter stated the residents of Agua Fria "begged the Archbishop not to give the property to the group." The letter stated the Archbishop "disregarded our wishes and would not even meet with us even though he had met several times with the militant group"

"We feel that we have been deserted by our church, by our bishop, and there is nothing we can do to reach him. He will not talk with us, he will not meet with us, and even now, after the terrible happenings, the militants are still in possession of the convent."

"As the representative of the Holy Father and the only one in a position to look into the matter, we appeal to you"

"Please do not wait until there is another tragedy with perhaps a loss of lives. Already four have been wounded."

"In a few days there could be a repetition of this past week's violence. We beg you, in the name of Christ, to do something."