

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office has two more people in custody today in relation to the ongoing criminal investigation stemming from the arrest of Devin Wilmoth on February 11 on charges of Robbery and Attempted Murder.

Charged in relation to a crime spree in Columbia County that includes Burglary, Robbery, Attempted Murder, Attempted Kidnapping and Theft are Ezra St. Helen, 23, Rainier, and Darren Cornwell, 36, Fairview. Investigators believe Wilmoth(26, Clatskanie), St. Helen and Cornwell are responsible for a string of violent crimes against numerous individuals in Columbia County, and that there could still be more victims and suspects involved.

These most recent arrests are the result of a three-county, multi-agency investigation. Assisting the Sheriff's Office in its investigation have been members of the Columbia Enforcement Narcotics Team (CENT), the St. Helens Police Department, Fairview Police Department and the U.S. Marshals office, who have played major roles in the investigation. The Rainier and Clatskanie Police departments and the Oregon State Police have also helped with the investigation, Sheriff Jeff Dickerson said.

"After the arrest of Wilmoth, we began to hear of other crimes that had been occurring and leading up to the events of February 9, when we believe Wilmoth stole Andrew McKinley's pickup at gunpoint and fired several shots at him," the sheriff said. "We now believe the events of February 9 were the last in a series of violent crimes perpetrated against people who the suspects figured would not go to the police."

Information thus far has led to indictments and arrests of the three suspects, and there could be additional crimes and suspects, the sheriff said.

"What we know thus far is that there are three – potentially four events beginning in mid-January where these suspects and possibly others robbed other victims at gunpoint and even fired shots at them, similar to the events we know about on February 9 with our victim, Mr. McKinley," Dickerson said.

Investigators believe Wilmoth, St. Helen and an unknown female suspect went to a home in

Rural Columbia County on January 20 and robbed the resident at gunpoint. The male victim was known to at least one of the suspects, who got away with \$1,500. The investigation shows the motive was to take drugs, money and valuables from the victim, who was unconvinced to surrender the cash until Wilmoth fired a shot just past him at point blank range on January 20.

Earlier that same day, Wilmoth and St. Helen, along with another unknown female burglarized a rural Columbia County residence.

On January 27, investigators believe Wilmoth, St. Helen and Cornwell returned to the residence where they had committed the burglary and robbed the male victim of \$2,500 at gunpoint. They also attempted to kidnap the victim, forcing him into the back of a pickup truck at gunpoint, the victim escaped and ran into the woods to hide.

That same day, Wilmoth, St. Helen and Cornwell are believed to have accosted the male victim they had robbed of \$1,500 on January 20th, tackling him as attempted to get away from them and relieving him of \$50 the victim had on his person. They also attempted to kidnap this victim, but he, too, escaped into the woods nearby.

"In all these instances," Dickerson said, "we believe the suspects thought they could get away with their crimes without being reported." He said the investigation continues to focus on other reports of similar crimes in the county.

Cornwell was arrested at his residence in Fairview without incident with the assistance of the Fairview Police Department on February 24, after he was indicted by the Columbia County Grand Jury. St. Helen was taken into custody at his residence in the Price Road Trailer Park near Rainier – the scene of numerous police actions in recent months – on February 25.

"This investigation continues to be the result of a high degree of cooperation across jurisdictional lines," the sheriff said. "With our limited resources, and only one detective who is assigned to our inter-agency narcotics team, our ability to stay on top of these types of crimes is minimal. We have had a huge amount of assistance from our partner agencies, and that, more than anything else is the reason we have these suspects in custody."

Anyone with information regarding these crimes or other criminal events can leave a message for investigators on the Columbia County Tip Line at (503) 397-0007 or (877-798-8881).

---



Darren Cornwell



Ezra St Helen



Devin Wilmoth