

Pr. George's Man Wins Damages For Attack by County Police Dog

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A Prince George's County Circuit Court civil jury awarded a Capitol Heights man nearly \$135,000 yesterday for injuries inflicted by a Prince George's County police dog in November 1997.

The jury deliberated more than four hours before finding that former county police canine Cpl. Anthony Mileo engaged in excessive force when he set his police dog on the man, Willie Walker. Walker was hospitalized for nearly a month for the numerous leg wounds the dog inflicted.

The judgment is believed to be the largest civil jury award stemming from a county police dog attack in recent memory, civil litigation attorneys said.

"I'm glad I'm a winner," Walker, 33, said. "It was an egregious case of excessive force," said Walker's Riverdale attorney, Terrell N. Roberts III.

The jury awarded Walker \$24,685 for medical bills, \$100,000 in compensatory damages and \$10,000 in punitive damages. Walker has lost feeling in part of his right leg and has permanent scars on both legs as a result of the attack.

Mileo, who joined the police force in 1989 and is facing at least two other civil lawsuits alleging he used his police dog to brutalize people, will not have to pay the award. The county indemnifies police officers in civil lawsuits related to their jobs.

Walker's lawsuit was one of at least 15 alleging that members of the county police canine unit have used their police dogs to brutalize people. The FBI is investigating whether the 23-officer canine unit has engaged in a pattern of brutality in recent years.

The incident occurred about 3:45 a.m. on Nov. 19, 1997, in the 4800 block of Nash Street in Capitol Heights, where Walker slept in the tow truck he used for work.

Walker testified that he was walking to a nearby store to heat up food he had in a container.

Cpl. Raymond M. Kane, who was patrolling the area, stopped him and shoved him against his truck, Walker testified. Kane rubbed against his buttocks in an offensive manner, so he ran away rather than follow Kane's orders to get on the ground, Walker testified.

Walker said he ran to the nearby home of a cousin and knocked on the door for help but gave up when he realized he could not escape. At that point, Walker testified, Mileo's dog began tearing at his legs. Kane testified that Walker fought him and dragged him 100 yards. Walker was charged with resisting arrest and assault; a Circuit Court jury acquitted him.

Mileo testified that Walker also tried to fight him, though he did not recall whether Walker tried to punch him. Mileo testified he did not write a report on the incident.

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