



Soldier denies killing was premeditated

By SAM FRIEDMAN sfriedman@newsminer.com

Testimony began Tuesday in a general court-martial for a Fort Wainwright soldier who admits killing his wife but denies planning to murder her.

A panel of five enlisted soldiers and five officers have the responsibility of deciding whether Spc. Aaron M. Rentfrow, 30, com-

mitted the crime of premeditated murder Jan. 9 when he strangled Tonya Lynn Rentfrow, 31, with a computer cord.

If convicted of premeditated murder, Rentfrow could be sentenced to life behind bars. Military prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty.

His defense attorneys are asking the panel to find he committed lesser crimes, such as voluntary or

involuntary manslaughter, punishable by maximum terms of 15 and 10 years respectively.

Although Rentfrow admitted he killed his wife, he did not enter any written plea agreement.

The trial is expected to take two or three days. It is being held in a military courtroom on Fort Wainwright.

Tuesday's testimony was devoted to witnesses called by the

prosecution. Trial counsel Maj. Rob Steele devoted much attention to photographs of the victim's body taken in the living room of her Fort Wainwright home. Steele said signs of premeditation included evidence Tonya Rentfrow was bound with duct tape before she was strangled and a sticky note with Rentfrow's handwriting was stuck to her back.

The sticky note has cell phone

numbers of two male former co-workers of Tonya Rentfrow. Both co-workers testified Tuesday that their relationship with her appeared to make Aaron Rentfrow jealous. One witness said Tonya Rentfrow once brought him home after work and this bothered Aaron Rentfrow because she had not told her husband he

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FIREWEED FINALE



Eric Engman/News-Miner

Fireweed blooms along the Chena River bike path behind the Carlson Center as a bicyclist passes by Tuesday.

Happy trails to Morning Star Ranch director

By ANDREW SHEELER For the News-Miner

Morning Star Ranch, a therapeutic ranch for disabled children and young adults, has temporarily closed following the departure of its director, Karma Brown.

Duane Mayes, director of the Division of Senior Services and Disabilities Services, said ranch board member Leslie Yamamoto told him the board plans to reopen the ranch by the end of August or the beginning of September. Yamamoto could not be reached for comment.

The Division of Senior and Disabilities Services is a part of the state Department of Health and Social Services and oversees licensing for businesses like Morning Star Ranch. Mayes said he is working with the board as it reorganizes and seeks to add

new members as well as a new director.

There was no stated reason for Brown's exit. She did not respond to phone calls requesting an interview.

Morning Star Ranch is a nonprofit business located on Adventure Road, off Chena Hot Springs Road. According to a presentation Brown made to the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services in February 2010, the mission of Morning Star Ranch is "to use the farm and ranch setting to enhance the quality of life for individuals of all abilities through educational activities and work experience."

The ranch offers horseback riding, gardening, wood working and a variety of other outdoor and indoor activities for approximately 30 kids. It has been billing Medicaid since 2000.



John Hagen/News-Miner file

Karma Brown, seen in 2003, resigned as director of Morning Star Ranch, a therapeutic ranch for disabled children.

Murkowski warns cuts won't spare AK projects

By DAN JOLING Associated Press

ANCHORAGE — Federal budget cuts are on the way and programs dear to Alaskans, such as highway and defense construction and rural health care, may not be spared over the next decade, according to U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

The country is drowning in debt, the Republican senator said Tuesday in a speech to Commonwealth North that was billed as a preview of the Capitol Hill agenda over the next four months.

"The spending levels are not sustainable," she said. "Our country is drowning in debt. What we've then placed on children and grandchildren is simply not acceptable."



Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, previewed the agenda on Capitol Hill in a speech Tuesday given to Commonwealth North.

How aggressively the nation's leaders deal with the situation is going to shape the direction and the strength of the country, she said.

The Budget Control Act of 2011 plan approved last month does not get the budget under control, she said. It requires a reduction in spending of \$917 billion. It requires Congress to vote on a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31.

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Rebels rejoice



Gadhafi still on the loose Page A10



Sourdough Jack sez:

"So they felt a 5.8 over there? That's just a minor after-dinner tummy rumble."

Strongest quake since '44 jars East Coast

By BOB LEWIS Associated Press

MINERAL, Va. — Tens of millions of people from Georgia to Canada were jolted Tuesday by the strongest earthquake to strike the East Coast since World War II. Three weeks before the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, office workers poured out of New York skyscrapers and the Pentagon, relieved it was nothing more sinister than an act of nature.

There were no known deaths or serious injuries, but cracks appeared in the Washington Monument and the National Cathedral, which had three capstones break off its tower. Windows shattered and grocery stores were wrecked in Virginia, where the quake was centered. The

White House and Capitol were evacuated. The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake registered magnitude 5.8. By West Coast standards, that is mild. But the East Coast is not accustomed to earthquakes at all, and this one unsettled some of the nation's biggest population centers.

In New York and Washington, people said their thoughts were of an explosion or terrorist attack. In some cases, workers in Washington

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The Associated Press

A magnitude 5.8 earthquake was felt up and down the East Coast. The United States Geological Survey said the quake was 3.7 miles beneath the surface.

NOTICE TO REAL PROPERTY TAXPAYERS
Borough lobby will be open until 12 midnight on September 1st for public access to the tax payment dropbox.
Payments must be postmarked prior to midnight on September 1st to avoid delinquency.
Prior year delinquent taxes must be paid by cashiers check, money order, or cash.
First-half 2011 Real Property Taxes are due Thursday, September 1, 2011
To make payments on-line visit www.co.fairbanks.ak.us (note: a convenience fee is charged for this service)
TAX BILL
DUE 09/01/11
DUE 11/01/11