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## **Animal Researchers' Homes Are Attacked As protests intensify, colleges take steps to protect scientists**

By RICHARD MONASTERSKY

When six masked people pounded on the front door of a scientist's home in Santa Cruz, Calif., and allegedly struck her husband late last month, the echo was heard by biomedical researchers and universities around the country. The intrusion represents an apparent escalation in the level of violence used by animal-rights protesters, who until now have not physically attacked academic scientists.

"We're facing a national movement," says George Blumenthal, chancellor of the University of California at Santa Cruz, where the biologist works. Other universities, he says, are going to have to face "individuals who are prepared to use potentially violent tactics that have a terrorizing effect on researchers."

But animal-rights activists dispute the contention that a crime was committed at the scientist's house.

### **Getting Personal**

The incident in Santa Cruz happened just after noon on Sunday, February 24, at the home of a biology professor who uses mice to study breast cancer. While her family was celebrating the birthday of one of her children, they heard people banging on the door so loudly that it seemed in danger of breaking. She and her children cowered in the back of their house as her husband opened the door. She said the assailants struck him on the hand and then fled in a car. (She and university officials requested that her name not be disclosed, to protect her from more violence.)

Her husband, who was not seriously injured, took down the car's license-plate number and provided it to the city police. Officers later raided a house where three Santa Cruz students live with several people who are not students. As of press time, no arrests had been made.

"I am flabbergasted that this happened," says the professor. "Free discussion is fine — that's what universities are all about. I'm just upset that they came onto my property and attacked my house."

Like recent assaults on homes in Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, the events in Santa Cruz reflect a shift in tactics for animal-rights extremists, who formerly focused on animal-research facilities. And the incident provides a warning to other universities that have not yet attracted the attention of violent opponents of animal research.

"This is having a terribly chilling effect on the research community, which is exactly what the activists want," says Frankie L. Trull, president of the Foundation for Biomedical Research, which has tracked attacks by animal-rights extremists. "It seems like everything has been stepped up in terms of aggression."

Earlier last month, members of an underground group called the Animal Liberation Front set off an incendiary device near the front door of a house owned by Edythe D. London, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California at Los Angeles, who uses primates to study addiction. It was the third firebombing aimed at a UCLA researcher in two years, and the second attack against Ms. London, whose home was flooded by vandals last fall. Researchers at several institutions have also received letters booby-trapped with razor blades.

### **'Murderer, Torturer'**

The attack in Santa Cruz was the second time that protesters had converged at the home of the breast-cancer researcher. Several weeks earlier, activists chalked the words "murderer" and "torturer" on the sidewalk in front of her house and leading to her front porch. They wrote graffiti at the home of one of the postdoctoral research fellows in her laboratory, and they showed up at the homes of two other university employees, smearing garbage and yelling at them.

The university reacted quickly, taking several steps to reassure faculty members, says Martha C. Zuniga, a professor in the same department.

The university offered to hire security guards for the people whose homes had been attacked, and it stepped up patrols around the animal-research facility and offices. It worked with the local police and designated a point person whom faculty members could contact at any time, says Ms. Zuniga.

At a meeting last week, Mr. Blumenthal said the recent incident was "the most serious attack on academic freedom" in the history of the campus.

But animal-rights activists question the version of events described by police and university officials. Peter Young, who served two years in prison for releasing minks from a farm, lives in Santa Cruz. Along with about 70 other people, he was outside the house that police raided on the evening of February 24. He says the police "bashed down the door, stormed in, guns drawn, and told everybody to get on the ground."

According to Mr. Young, "This was an attempt to silence protesters and dissuade people from participating in effective protest tactics."

Although he says he does not know what happened at the house of the professor, he argues that the masked group was most likely knocking on the door to engage in a legal protest. "Being loud on a front porch, which is called a protest, is something we're allowed to do," he says.

He questions whether the masked group assaulted the researcher's husband. "Violence against human beings would be a fundamental line that would never be crossed," he says. "It would not be unheard of for an animal researcher to come out of his or her house and violently assault protesters."

### **Security Costs**

Lt. Rudy Escalante, the detective in charge of the investigation, says there is no indication that the professor's husband started any violence. He was pushed and struck in the hand, which was bruised but did not require medical attention.

The biology professor and her family now have security personnel stationed full time at their house. Following the first incident at her home, Santa Cruz had provided security on nights when protests were considered most likely. In fact, a guard had been on duty the night before the attack.

She praised the university's response, saying, "It's just been great."

To discourage further violence, Mr. Blumenthal says, "we need to be proactive in making sure that students understand what is the kind of research that is taking place."

Other universities have taken legal steps to combat animal-rights activists. Last month, following the attack on the home of the UCLA researcher, the University of California's Board of Regents obtained a temporary restraining order against several animal-rights activists and organizations, barring them from harassing University of California employees who conduct research on animals.

The legal action "sends a message that the university is serious about assaults on its investigators," says Gene D. Block, chancellor of UCLA. "We have to do everything that's reasonable to stop this."

But Christine L. Garcia, an attorney with the Animal Law Office, an advocacy group in San Francisco, calls the UCLA suit a retaliation for a lawsuit she filed in November against the university and the Santa Monica Police Department. Two of the people in the complaint filed by UCLA were plaintiffs in the lawsuit she had brought against the university. Her suit alleges that the university and Santa Monica police officers obstructed the freedom of speech of several animal-rights activists. The university and the police, she says, "are trying to intimidate picketers about being vocal about what UCLA is involved in."

Officials in Utah are using a different tactic to deal with animal-rights protesters. The State Senate passed a bill last month that would conceal the names of scientists at state universities who use animals in their research. And in response to protests against researchers, Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County have barred protesters from demonstrating within 100 feet of private homes. The ban is apparently having the desired effect, says Jeffrey R. Botkin, a professor of pediatrics and associate vice president for research integrity at University of Utah.

P. Michael Conn, associate director of the Oregon National Primate Research Center, has been harassed by animal-rights protesters, and he says universities must fight back. "If the animal extremists win, the people who will suffer are the public," says Mr. Conn, because animal research helps develop cures for diseases.

Ms. Trull, of the Foundation for Biomedical Research, in Washington, says the recent home attacks "pose a whole new series of problems for academic institutions: What kind of security does a university provide for a biomedical researcher or other faculty? What are the cost implications to an educational research facility?"

The violence is also driving people out of research, she says. One professor who conducts experimental surgery told her that he couldn't fill six postdoctoral-research fellowships for which he had funds.

But Mark S. Blumberg, a psychology professor at the University of Iowa, has seen the opposite effect. In 2004 extremists broke into a research facility where he works and destroyed experiments and equipment. After that, he says, "I didn't have a single student who ever said, 'Oh, my God, what am I doing in this business?' In fact, it was the opposite. It emboldened them."

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