



AFP/GETTY IMAGES
 Government contractor Warren Weinstein, a Rockville resident, is shown in a video while being held captive by al-Qaida militants.

U.S. drone strike kills hostage from Md.

Weinstein was captured by al-Qaida in 2011; Obama says he regrets Jan. mistake

BY IAN DUNCAN AND JOHN FRITZE
 The Baltimore Sun

WASHINGTON — When the U.S. military targeted a suspected al-Qaida compound on the lawless border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in January, President Barack Obama said Thursday, intelligence officials didn't know the group was holding an aid worker from Rockville there.

Warren Weinstein, a government contractor who was captured by al-Qaida in August 2011, was killed three months ago in a U.S. drone strike, Obama said from the White House. It was the first acknowledgment of his death and of the United States' role in it.

Weinstein was focused on economic development projects in the region when he was captured. Elaine Weinstein, who was informed of her husband's death Wednesday, said no words could "do justice to the disappointment and heartbreak we are going through."

"We do not yet fully understand all of the facts surrounding Warren's death but we do understand that the U.S. government will be conducting an independent investigation of the circumstances," she said in a statement. "We look forward to the results of that See **HOSTAGE**, page 21

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND
TRANSPORTATION CHANGES: State Transportation Secretary Pete Rahn is expected to name Paul Comfort as the new head of the Maryland Transit Administration today, a day after Melinda B. Peters resigned as head of the State Highway Administration. **NEWS PG 2**

NATION
ATTORNEY GENERAL CONFIRMED: Loretta Lynch, who won Senate confirmation Thursday to become the next U.S. attorney general and the first African-American woman to serve as the nation's top law enforcement officer, is taking over the Justice Department amid a national uproar over alleged police brutality that could largely define her tenure. **NEWS PG 6**

TODAY'S WEATHER
PARTLY SUNNY
57 HIGH **34** LOW
 Rain on Saturday **SPORTS PG 14**

SUN INVESTIGATES

A history of 'rough rides'

Freddie Gray is not the first to come out of a city police wagon with serious injuries



JENNA ERB
 Christine Abbott, who has a lawsuit against city officials in U.S. court, is on the left in a city police van after her arrest June 2, 2012.

Gray, sisters suffered lead poisoning, family said in 2008 lawsuit

BY JEAN MARBELLA
 The Baltimore Sun



Freddie Gray

In a boxful of documents stored in Baltimore City Circuit Court, the outlines of an all-too-familiar inner-city childhood emerge. The life of Freddie Gray, who died Sunday from a severe spinal cord injury sustained in police custody, had a beginning as tragic, in a way, as his end.

As children, he and his two sisters were found to have damaging lead levels in their blood, which led to educational, behavioral and medical problems, according to a lawsuit they filed in 2008 against the owner of a Sandtown-Winchester home the family rented for four years. See **HISTORY**, page 10

The latest

- Protests continue for fifth straight day.
- Police Commissioner Anthony W. Batts meets with members of Gray family.
- Police cancel leave for all officers.
- The Rev. Jesse Jackson urges peaceful protests. **NEWS PGS 8-9**
- Michael Brown's family files civil suit against Ferguson, Mo. **NEWS PG 15**

BY DOUG DONOVAN AND MARK PUENTE
 The Baltimore Sun

When a handcuffed Freddie Gray was placed in a Baltimore police van April 12, he was talking and breathing. When the 25-year-old emerged, "he could not talk and he could not breathe," according to one police official, and he died a week later of a spinal injury.

But Gray is not the first person to come out of a Baltimore police wagon with serious injuries.

Relatives of Dondi Johnson Sr., who was left a paraplegic after a 2005 police van ride, won a \$74 million verdict against police officers. A year earlier, Jeffrey Alston was awarded \$39 million by a jury after he became paralyzed from the neck down as the result of a van ride. Others have also received payouts after filing lawsuits.

For some, such injuries have been inflicted by what is known as a "rough ride" — an "un-sanctioned technique" in which police vans are driven to cause "injury or pain" to unbuckled, handcuffed detainees, former city police officer Charles J. Key testified as an expert five years ago in a lawsuit over Johnson's subsequent death.

As daily protests continue in the streets of Baltimore, authorities are trying to determine how Gray was injured, and their focus is on the 30-minute van ride that followed his arrest. "It's clear what happened, happened inside the van," See **VANS**, page 8



NASA
 A view of the star cluster Westerlund 2 taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, launched 25 years ago today.

At age 25, Hubble still has a bright future, astronomers say

BY SCOTT DANCE
 The Baltimore Sun

The Hubble Space Telescope survived decades of delays, glitches and blunders to fulfill predictions that it would rewrite science textbooks. But as it moves into the final years of its life, scientists say some of its best work still could be ahead of it.

Hubble's past and future discoveries will guide the new James Webb Space Telescope, scheduled to launch in 2018, as the next-generation observatory focuses

more closely on the Big Bang and helps paint a fuller picture of the properties of distant planets and galaxies.

As Hubble marks the silver anniversary of its April 24, 1990, launch, scientists are celebrating what has been a turbulent yet rewarding history, answering long-held questions about the age and expansion of the universe. But they also expect a bright future with more surprise discoveries as they peer into the cosmos in new ways.

"The combination of these two observa- See **HUBBLE**, page 18

ORIOLES

VS RED SOX

★
★
★
★
★
★

TONIGHT @ 6:30PM

TOMORROW @ 6:30PM

SUNDAY @ 1:00PM

Jesse Jackson says police van 'became a tomb'

Civil rights leader urges city residents to protest peacefully for Freddie Gray

By YVONNE WENGER
The Baltimore Sun

The Rev. Jesse Jackson on Thursday urged the people of Baltimore to continue their peaceful protest and expressed his faith in the leadership of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

But the veteran civil rights leader said the public has been forced to wait too long for answers in the death of Freddie Gray, the 25-year-old man who died Sunday after sustaining a spinal cord injury while in police custody a week earlier.

"If six young black civilians took an unarmed white police officer and put him in a truck and he came out dead, we wouldn't be waiting this long," Jackson said in a telephone interview with The Baltimore Sun. "People get the impression there is a cover-up."

He praised the men and women who have been taking part in protests this week.

"People have shown great restraint. I hope they maintain that restraint," Jackson said. "The worst thing that could happen is people are indifferent to this killing, and do



JONATHAN GIBBY/GETTY IMAGES

The Rev. Jesse Jackson said he has faith in Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, but that people have been waiting too long for answers in the death of Freddie Gray.

nothing. ... The police wagon became a tomb."

Of the protests, he said, "If it becomes violent, it distracts from the message. The agenda will be lost and it will be burned up in the fire. I hope that that does not happen."

Jackson, who spoke to Rawlings-Blake on Wednesday, said the mayor has been leading the city in the right direction. He said her failed proposals on police misconduct during the recent General Assembly session deserved support. Among her proposals that failed during the 90-day

session were changes to a police bill of rights to make it easier to discipline officers.

Rawlings-Blake needs statewide support to lift families out of poverty through jobs, education, mental health clinics and better housing, Jackson said. He said he hoped the protests would help lead to such change.

"The blood of the innocent continues to redeem and renew people's energy to fight for justice," Jackson said.

In Baltimore on Thursday, leaders from local interfaith groups also issued a statement urging citizens to express their anger "in peaceful and constructive ways."

The Baltimore Interfaith Coalition and the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council suggested that this weekend, congregations gather outside their houses of worship before or after services as a "visible sign of solidarity." Worshipers could observe a moment of silence and reflection, the groups suggested.

Jackson said he's been invited by community leaders to come to Baltimore, but no date has been set for a visit.

His son, former Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. of Illinois, has been at a halfway house in Baltimore since last month after being released from federal prison. He pleaded guilty two years ago for improper use of campaign funds.

ywenger@baltsun.com
twitter.com/yvonnwenger

City has history of injuries in vans

VANS, From page 1

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said Monday at a news conference.

Christine Abbott, a 27-year-old assistant librarian at the Johns Hopkins University, is suing city officers in federal court, alleging that she got such a ride in 2012. According to the suit, officers cuffed Abbott's hands behind her back, threw her into a police van, left her unbuckled and "maniacally drove" her to the Northern District police station, "tossing [her] around the interior of the police van."

"They were braking really short so that I would slam against the wall, and they were taking really wide, fast turns," Abbott said in an interview that mirrored allegations in her lawsuit. "I couldn't brace myself. I was terrified."

The lawsuit states she suffered unspecified injuries from the arrest and the ride.

"You feel like a piece of cargo," she added. "You don't feel human."

The van's driver stated in a deposition that Abbott was not buckled into her seat belt, but the officers have denied driving recklessly.

Police officials have not directly linked Gray's van ride to his injuries but did say that he was not buckled in, as required by department policy. Medical experts say Gray could have injured his spine when he was arrested and that injury could have worsened in the van through even an inadvertent bump, turn or stop.

"From my work in the criminal defense arena over the past 40 years, I'm aware of this term 'rough ride' and that it happens," said Byron L. Warnken, a University of Baltimore law school professor who trains police officers in techniques for dealing with people they stop. "How frequent it is, how abusive it is — I don't know."

But, he added, if a prisoner dies of a broken neck while in custody, the city has a problem. "The force it takes to break a neck means wrongdoing, in my judgment."

Fractured neck, then death

The most sensational case in Baltimore involved Johnson, a 43-year-old plumber arrested for public urination. He was handcuffed and placed in a transport van in good health. He emerged a quadriplegic.

Before he died, he complained to his doctor that he was not buckled into his seat when the police van "made a sharp turn," sending him "face first" into the interior of the van, court records state. He was "violently thrown around the back of the vehicle as [police officers] drove in an aggressive fashion, taking turns so as to injure [Johnson] who was helplessly cuffed," the lawsuit stated.

Johnson, who suffered a fractured neck, died two weeks later of pneumonia caused by his paralysis. His family sued, and a jury agreed that three officers were negligent in the way they treated Johnson. The initial \$74 million award, however, was eventually reduced to \$219,000 by Maryland's Court of Special Appeals because state law caps such payouts.

In 1997, Alston became paralyzed from the neck down in a van after being arrested. Alston said he told the officers he couldn't breathe, but they refused to give him an inhaler for asthma.

Officers said the 32-year-old repeatedly rammed his head into the side of the van, freed himself from a seat belt and thrashed some more.

Alston sued, and at the trial, Dr. Adrian Barbul, a Sinai Hospital trauma surgeon, testified that Alston had no external head injuries when he was taken to the emergency room.

A jury awarded Alston \$39 million, but he and the city settled for \$6 million. In settlements, the city generally does not acknowledge liability; the officers involved in the case did not face disciplinary actions.

Alston's attorney, Philip Federico, said Thursday that the Gray case brought back memories of Alston, who died about eight years ago. What jumped out was that both men had asthma and were denied when they asked police for inhalers, he said.

Federico said he doesn't condone misconduct by police but cautioned that all of

the facts in the Gray case are not yet known. The autopsy will be crucial in showing whether Gray had any head injuries or whether the spine injury came from his neck twisting, he added.

Federico said of the protests and national spotlight in Baltimore: "It's tearing our city apart. We're going in the wrong direction from a race-relations standpoint."

In 1997, the city paid \$100,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by the family of Homer Long, who suffered a fatal heart attack in a van in 2003. Family members said the arrest was improper; officers said Long contributed to his death by behaving belligerently during the arrest.

And in 1980, a 58-year-old man broke his neck and became paralyzed during a ride to the Southwestern District. While seated on a bench with his hands cuffed behind his back, John Wheatfall was thrown to the floor and hit his head against a wall, The Sun reported. The officer said he swerved to avoid an oncoming car, and investigators ruled that the officer was not reckless.

At the time, the vans did not have seat belts, and police officials said installing them could cause other injuries during accidents. An official said: "We carry thousands and thousands of people in those wagons, and this is the most serious accident I've ever heard of."

Wheatfall sued for \$3 million, but a judge ruled that there was no evidence the officer was negligent. The jury granted Wheatfall \$20,000, the maximum amount under a state law when an accident is caused by an unknown driver of another vehicle.

'Like a roller coaster'

On June 2, 2012, Abbott was hosting a party at her Hampden home when two officers arrived on a noise complaint. According to her lawsuit in U.S. District Court, the officers argued with a guest for not putting out a cigarette as they spoke to him. When Abbott tried to calm both sides, the officers threw her to the ground. They pulled her up, ripping her dress and exposing her breasts. They handcuffed her and "forcefully threw [Abbott] into the back of a police van," the lawsuit states.

"It felt like a roller coaster," Abbott said in the interview. "Except a roller coaster is more secure because you're strapped in."

Responding to the lawsuit, police acknowledged that Abbott was not strapped into the van. But they denied throwing her into it. Michael Marshall, the attorney for the two officers, added in an interview, "The wagon guy is a veteran officer, he's not giving anyone a rough ride."

Police did not respond to a request for details about complaints related to the vans.

Department policy governing "persons in police custody" now requires officers to use seat belts to "prevent the detainee from maneuvering out of the restraint and possibly causing injury to himself/herself or others." It also says officers are required to take detainees to the nearest medical facility upon request.

Abbott was detained for 19 hours and eventually charged with second-degree assault and resisting arrest, among other charges. All charges were dropped three months later.

In the Gray arrest, video shows him yelling in pain as officers hoisted him into a police van on April 12. He was taken to the Western District police station and later underwent surgery at Maryland Shock Trauma Center for three fractured neck vertebrae and a crushed voice box — injuries that doctors said are more common among the elderly or victims of high-speed crashes.

Medical experts said it takes powerful blunt force — akin to the impact from a car accident — to tear or sever the spinal cord. Such injuries can fatally impair the body's ability to regulate blood flow and breathing.

If Gray's neck was already injured when he was placed in the van, it might not have taken a rough ride to render him unable to speak or breathe, as he was when officers retrieved him from the vehicle, said Dr. Ali Bydon, an associate professor of neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Video of Gray standing at the back of the van before being placed inside is not necessarily proof that his spine was uninjured before the ride, he said.

"It can be a progressive, cumulative loss of function if the spinal cord is unstable and

unprotected," Bydon said. "You don't need tremendous force to follow up on further injury to the spine — a force you and me can take because we have stable necks, but that an unstable neck cannot withstand."

Police officials said Tuesday that they are checking all vans to make sure they're outfitted with proper restraints, and they are considering putting cameras inside. City Councilman Brandon Scott said he plans to hold hearings on the state of the police fleet of vans or "wagons," including why the department halted a plan last year to reduce their use.

Natalie Finegar, the public defender for Baltimore City, said she does not believe rough rides are a common practice in Baltimore — or she would have heard about it.

Key, the former city police officer who is now a consultant, said another term for the practice was "bringing them up front." By slamming on the brakes, detainees would bump against the cage behind the driver's seat. "If it's done on purpose, it's a criminal act and violates regulations," said Key, who is not involved in Gray's case. If a detainee is injured in a ride due to action by the driver, the incident must be reported, he added.

University of South Carolina professor Geoffrey Alpert, an expert in police force, said rough rides are also known as "screen tests." When police cars or vans had screens between the front and back seats, drivers would stop short — "to avoid a dog" — sending a handcuffed prisoner flying face-first into the screen, he said.

"Cops used to laugh about it. That was big in the 1980s and 1990s," Alpert said. "It was obviously against policy and illegal. I remember in some trainings that police chiefs would say, 'You'd better bring the damn dog you were trying to avoid if you come in with a prisoner with such an injury.'"

Alpert added, "Now a lot of these vans and cars have videos in them. So it doesn't happen very often."

Baltimore Sun reporters Scott Dance and Justin Fenton and research librarian Paul McCardell contributed to this article.
ddonovan@baltsun.com
mpunte@baltsun.com



BALTIMORE SUN 2004

Jeffrey Alston talks with his lawyers, Kerry Staton, right, and Philip Federico, after winning a \$39 million judgment in his lawsuit against Baltimore City police after he became paralyzed during a van ride. The city settled for \$6 million.