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Victims of Police Attack During Anti-War Protest at Oakland Port Speak Out

Statement of Willow Rosenthal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OAKLAND, CA - On the morning of April 7th, 2003 I went to the entrance to the American President's Line (APL) Terminal at 5:30 AM and later (around 7:30) to the entrance to the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) Terminal to participate in non-violent picket lines in order to draw attention to the contracts APL and SSA have with the United States Department of Defense.

The picket consisted of people walking slowly in a circle blocking the entrance to the Terminals with signs, singing and chanting. After participating in the picket at APL, my friend Nan Eastep and I decided to move to the picket at SSA where we had heard that more people were needed. My friend left shortly after we arrived at SSA because she didn't want to get arrested and it seemed like the police were starting to break things up at the APL picket. While I was on the picket line at SSA, I started hearing loud noises and someone said the police were using "shock grenades," but not tear gas to break up the picket lines at APL. Shortly after hearing this news, the police arrived on motorcycles and positioned themselves in front of the picket I was participating in. They got off their bikes and stood in a line approximately 25 feet from the picket. When the police arrived at the entrance to the SSA Terminal, I decided I didn't want to get arrested, and so I walked across the street to begin the walk back to my house located on Henry Street just off 7th about ¾ of a mile away. The police had evidently forced the other pickets at APL to break up and many of these people had assembled across the street from the SSA entrance. I joined this group across the street from the SSA Terminal at the entrance to Maritime.

As soon as I joined the group, the police moved in towards us. I believe it was around

8:45am at this time. This group was not engaging in any demonstration or activity, but was watching what was happening across the street at the terminal entrance, and I was intending to leave the area and go home. The police started driving towards the group (of which I was a member) on their motorcycles and shot more of the shock grenades, and were firing into the crowd with some other type of weapon. I ran with the rest of the group up Maritime attempting to stay away from the police fire. Since the police had closed off any other route we kept walking up Maritime. After a few minutes the police were not visible anymore.

At the corner of 7th Street and Maritime the group engaged in a discussion of what to do next. It was decided that we would go back to the BART Station about 1/2 mile up 7th Street (my house is two blocks away from the station). Police cars were blocking the entrance to 7th Street from Maritime. While the group was discussing, some of us were marching in a circle and singing on Maritime. We were there maybe about 15 minutes. I think it was around 9:15am. At this point, the police rode into view again on their motorcycles and made a line on Maritime facing 7th Street. I was afraid that if I went onto 7th Street this might be viewed by the police as an attempt to block the street, so I stayed on Maritime. I'm not sure if the police used their PA system to communicate with us, but if so, it was too low for me to hear. The group had decided to go up 7th Street back to the BART station, but right at that moment when we began moving in the direction of BART, and before much of the group had left Maritime, the police got off their bikes and began to fire into the group. The police line was about 30 feet away from me at this time. I saw the police begin to raise their rifles, so I turned to run. I was hit on the back of the right calf as I attempted to run away from the police fire. I felt that I was badly injured but I kept running since I was afraid of getting hit again. I ran into 7th Street, and the police kept advancing towards us, trapping us on the left side of the street just before a tunnel without pedestrian access that I could see. I was very afraid that I would be hit again. I didn't know if I should try to escape through the truck traffic in the 7th Street tunnel but that seemed dangerous too. Someone let me lean on them as we attempted to flee. Finally we found the entrance to the pedestrian walkway, and a few men carried me to the corner of 7th Street where a woman with a car drove me to my house on Henry Street.

I believe we arrived at my house at around 9:30 or 9:45. I'm not sure what was shot at me, but from the mark, it was probably one of the wooden dowels they were using, or maybe one of the grenades. The entire back of my calf was blood red and swollen with a circular mark of broken skin about 3/4 of an inch across in the center. The calf was numb about 3 inches around the point of impact and I wasn't able to walk without assistance. We took photos then and later when I went to the Kaiser Oakland Emergency Room where I also filed a complaint against the Oakland Police Department, of which I did not get a copy. A police officer took my complaint.

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