

Salt Lake City cop shoots dog dead in back yard; Owner wants \$1.5 million

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A 2-and-a-half-year-old Weimaraner dog named "Geist," playful, loyal and adored by his owner, had his life cut short when he was fatally shot in his own back yard by a police officer in Salt Lake City.

"This was an unfortunate circumstance in which an officer was doing exactly what we in the public require of them, and an animal who was doing what by instinct believes appropriate," said former Salt Lake City Police Chief Chris Burbank.

Police claim the dog was acting aggressively.

"About 15 minutes ago, I got a phone call from Utah Animal Control calling to tell me that an officer had shot and killed my dog," said Sean Kendall, Geist's owner, in June 2014. "He was inside the back yard in a fenced-off area."

Back at his house Kendall confronted officers. The cop who pulled the trigger, Officer Brett Olsen, had already left the scene.

"He was threatened by the dog and he shot the dog. That's as simple as it gets," another officer told Kendall.

"So I gotta bury my dog because an officer couldn't back up and close the [----] gate," said Kendall.

So did it happen?

Salt Lake City affiliate KSTU says it started when a little boy was reported missing. Officer Olsen was dispatched to the neighborhood.

A civilian review board says Olsen was in the backyard for less than a minute looking for the missing boy,

"As the dog approached (Officer Olsen) said he fleetingly considered using his Taser, but felt he could not expect success with it, due to the distance and speed of the approaching dog. He fired 2 rounds from a distance of 4 feet, killing Geist," the report says.

"The search for the missing child was done very poorly, against their standing policies, and those actions resulted in the violation of my 4th Amendment rights, and led to the ultimate death of Geist," Kendall said.

A police internal-affairs report cleared Officer Brett Olsen for shooting and killing Geist. Kendall wants him fired.

"When police investigate themselves, typically they find themselves not guilty," said Kendall.

The case has drawn outrage from animal-rights activists who say the officer never should have gone into the back yard.

The civilian review board report says Olsen was never trained to deal with aggressive animals' behavior.

"We are committed to ensuring that as we move forward, we treat animals as they should be, and that is as a member of individuals' families," said Salt Lake County Sheriff Jim Winder.

Police have offered Sean Kendall a \$10,000 settlement for killing his dog, but he rejected it. He's now seeking \$1.5 million for damages.

"There needs to be accountability. If there is not accountability in this action, nobody is safe from police officers just disregarding people's 4th Amendment rights and then using excessive force," said Former Salt Lake Mayor Rocky Anderson.

That missing boy was found in his own house, a result that adds salt to an already deep wound over the killing of this innocent pup.