

Gunman shoots cops, officials at meeting

by UPI

KIRKWOOD, Mo. - A local resident armed with a gun invaded a city council meeting in a St. Louis suburb Thursday and killed two police officers and three officials. The man, identified by witnesses as Charles Lee "Cookie" Thornton, an independent contractor, was shot dead by police in Kirkwood city hall, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. Thornton was known for having disagreements with the mayor and others in city government. A federal judge recently dismissed a lawsuit claiming that officials had violated his right to free speech by having him removed from meetings for personal attacks like shouting "jackass, jackass, jackass" over and over. Tracy Panus, a police spokeswoman, told the Times that the first victim, a police officer, was shot in a parking lot near the police station at 7 p.m. The shooter then entered city hall and began firing just after Mayor Mike Swobodo opened the council meeting. Two people were wounded, including the mayor. One of the dead was Councilwoman Connie Karr, the Post-Dispatch said. "He came from the back of the room," Janet McNichols, a Post-Dispatch correspondent, told her newspaper. "He kept saying something about, 'Shoot the mayor,' and he just walked around shooting anybody he could."

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