

Fraud, espionage and eating meth: The top 5 stories in 2018 from Utah, federal courts

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In the past year, Northern Utah courts have seen a lot, including unique cases and important lawsuits.

As the year comes to a close, the Standard-Examiner takes a look back at some of the top five most noteworthy events (and a few dishonorable mentions) to take place in Utah's state and federal court systems.

1. Former Weber Sheriff's Office evidence technician pleads guilty to eating meth on the job and compromising evidence

In August, former evidence clerk [Candice Barbara Follum was charged on 40 counts](#) stemming from allegations that she ate meth taken from the evidence locker she was responsible for maintaining. The indictment came months after she was fired from the Weber County Sheriff's Office.

In Dec. 2017, she was [found to be "under the influence" at work](#), and later told investigators she had been stealing drugs from the evidence locker for roughly three years. Follum said she used the drugs "every other day" and said she ingested the meth by eating it, according to charging documents.

Investigators later found that Follum tampered with evidence [from at least 46 cases](#), with some cases being thrown out entirely due to a lack of evidence.

Follum [pleaded guilty in October to all 40 counts](#), and was [sentenced in December to spend a year in jail](#) custody — six months behind bars and six months on work release, able to leave jail to work during the day and return to jail at night.

2. Death penalty being sought against Ogden couple accused of abusing their 3-year-old child to death

Prosecutors declared their intent to [seek capital punishment](#) against an Ogden couple, Miller Costello and Brenda Emile, in July. The two are accused of killing their 3-year-old daughter, Angelina Costello.

The decision came months after a [two-day preliminary hearing](#) in February where investigators said the girl resembled a "child from a concentration camp" when her body was found on July 6, 2017. A prosecutor said during the February hearing that Angelina was 13 pounds when she died, and added "that should be the weight of a 3-month-old, not a 3-year-old."

Costello and Emile were arrested and charged with aggravated murder just days after the severely malnourished child was found with [injuries to her head, chest, wrists, legs and a "piece missing" from her nose](#), according to an Ogden Police detective who testified during the February hearings.

The two have [jury trial dates](#) that are set to start in August 2020. As of December, the trial is set to last over six weeks.

3. Local jails facing a number of lawsuits regarding inmate deaths and neglect

Although the number of jail deaths across the state in 2017 were [down drastically from the year before](#), both Weber and Davis counties saw new lawsuits filed against them alleging they could have done more to prevent inmates from dying in their care.

Two lawsuits were filed in January against the Davis County Jail. One alleged that jail officials [deprived Kara Noakes of life-sustaining prescription medications](#) when she was booked on a traffic-related offense and later lead to her death in her cell on June 23, 2016.

The other claimed that jail nurses did not check Heather Miller's vital signs after she fell from her bunk and moved her to another cell with little monitoring, where she experienced massive internal bleeding for hours, according to the suit. The jail later responded to the suit and [denied allegations](#) that Miller was neglected in the hours before her death.

The same suit also claimed that the Davis County Jail had no policies on how medical staff and jailers should handle inmates after a fall, and later, it was revealed that [the jail went six years without any documented protocols for providing health care to inmates](#), Davis County Sheriff Todd Richardson said in a wrongful-death lawsuit deposition.

Another suit filed against the Davis jail in July claimed that Gregory Hayes [overdosed on prescription drugs](#) that were returned to him upon his release from jail, then died in a holding cell after he was re-arrested a few hours later.

In June, a former Davis County sheriff's deputy [filed a \\$1 million civil suit](#) alleging the county broke an agreement to keep secret some of the disciplinary proceedings against him over his misconduct in a SWAT incident. The county later [denied the allegations](#).

In addition to allegations against the jail's practices in individual cases, in May, the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah and the Disability Law Center [filed a lawsuit against Davis County and the Utah State Records Committee](#) in an effort to make jail standards for the Davis County Jail publicly available.

Weber County saw two lawsuits filed in 2018 regarding the treatment of inmates in their county jail.

In February, a federal lawsuit claimed that jail personnel neglected Ashley Jessop who died after being jailed for public intoxication on Feb. 27, 2016. The suit also claims [Jessop was left on the floor of a cell for up to 24 hours](#) before personnel noticed he was largely unresponsive. Lawyers for Ogden City denied the claims in a May court filing.

October brought another lawsuit against the Weber jail, this time an Arizona man filed a \$2.48 million civil rights suit against the county, claiming Weber County Jail deputies [slammed his head into a brick wall](#) and then onto the concrete floor of a holding cell. The suit also claimed that the jail had deleted a video that would have shown the attack, but later it was discovered that [the video had not been erased](#).

4. Kingston brothers and business associate accused of stealing over \$1.1 billion from government

Utah businessmen Jacob and Isaiah Kingston are among the three men indicted for allegedly [defrauding the government of over \\$1.1 billion](#) worth of refundable fuel tax credits from 2010 to 2016, according to federal court documents.

The two, along with California businessman Lev Dermen, then allegedly planned on fleeing the United States for Turkey to avoid prosecution. The [Kingston brothers](#), owners of the Washakie Renewable Energy plant in Box Elder County, had invested millions, bought a house and a bank in Turkey and forged ties with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, according to charging documents.

In August, the three were [indicted on felony charges](#) including money laundering and fraud. A superseding indictment was filed in November, charging the three with 14 counts of filing false tax returns and 11 counts of money laundering.

All three are being held in jail without bail, [despite their efforts to be released](#). As of December, they are each being held at separate jails: Isaiah Kingston is being held at the Weber County Jail, Jacob Kingston is being held at the Salt Lake County Jail, and Dermen is being held at the Davis County Jail. All three have pleaded not guilty to all charges, and the case is still ongoing.

5. Syracuse resident Ron Hansen accused of selling U.S. defense intelligence to Chinese government

A 58-year-old Syracuse man and former agent for the Defense Intelligence Agency [was arrested in June at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport](#), ready to board a plane to China, according to federal charging documents.

Ron Hansen for several years [furnished Chinese agents with intelligence information](#) and export-controlled encryption software in return for \$800,000 and was preparing to hand over intelligence documents classified as secret, according to the FBI.

In a letter meant to be opened by family after his death, Hansen provided details for an obituary, including a declaration that he was “one of the most successful intelligence officers in the history of U.S. intelligence.” Prior to his arrest, FBI agents had been [listening to Hansen’s phone calls for years](#). Federal agents allegedly heard a conversation between Hansen and his wife about moving to China, and another where Hansen joked about faking his own death.

Hansen, who was held at a federal detention facility in Seattle for roughly a month before [being transferred to Utah](#), pleaded not guilty on July 13 to 15 charges of acting as an unregistered foreign agent for China, bulk cash smuggling, structuring monetary transactions and smuggling goods from the United States. He could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted.

Hansen is being held without bail at the Salt Lake County Jail as he awaits the conclusion of his case.

Dishonorable Mentions

Two Weber County men accuse each other of shooting and killing homeless man in calls made from jail played in court

A pair of local men, Cory Fitzwater and Dalton Aiken, charged with first-degree murder told family members during calls from the Weber County Jail that the other had [shot and killed 28-year-old Brian Racine](#) near Ogden's 21st Street Pond in August. The recordings were played during a December preliminary hearing with both men present in court. Both Fitzwater and Aiken pleaded not guilty to murder at the December hearing and [are being held in jail without bail](#) as their case continues.

Ogden attorney pleads guilty to multiple drug charges, including charge that he brought drugs into Weber County Jail

Tony Miles, a Utah attorney for over 25 years based in Ogden, [pleaded guilty in October](#) to two counts of possession of a controlled substance in a correctional facility, both third-degree felonies. In return for his plea, a third-degree felony forgery charge and a misdemeanor drug charge were dropped. In the past month, Miles was arrested on additional drug charges, [prompting an Ogden judge to revoke his bail](#) for violating the conditions of his pre-trial release. Miles will be held at the Weber County Jail until his Jan. 9, 2019 sentencing hearing.

Did we miss anything? Let us know in the comments which case we should have mentioned

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