

KERLIKOWSKE'S DEADLY DECISION

In 2001, a riot broke out on Mardi Gras at Seattle's Pioneer Square. Rather than send his officers in to break up the riot, Kerlikowske ordered them to stand by. So police officers stood at the edge of the crowd while the victims pleaded for help. Scores were injured, several women were sexually assaulted, and Kris Kime died amid the violence. Kris Kime, a 20-year-old college student and construction worker, was violently attacked after attempting to aid a woman who had been knocked to the ground.

Kime's family sued, and Seattle settled out of court for \$1,750,000 and acknowledged that its police strategy had presented a public safety threat.

Kerlikowske, however, felt that he had made the right decision. "I think we moved in at the proper time given the size of that crowd, the mob mentality that existed and what I saw. And I take responsibility, and I stand by that decision. Every police decision, especially in this particular situation, is that we are damned if we do and damned if we don't." He added, "The criticism has been just unbelievable."

Apparently his officers felt otherwise. Officer Ken Saucier, a member of the Seattle Police Guild board, said that if it's a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation, "our contention is ... you might as well be damned if you do. We're paid to *do*. That's why most of the people get into [police work]."

"Police officers are sworn to do a duty, and they want to do that," he said. "When they're held back, they're not able to do what they got into the job to do," said Mike Edwards, Seattle Police Guild president.

"I watched robberies. I saw at least three violent felony assaults. The universal reaction (from officers there) was one of frustration and anguish. And I mean acute anguish," said Stuart Colman, Seattle Police Guild vice president.

In March of 2001, the Seattle Police Officers' Guild overwhelmingly voted no confidence in Kerlikowske. In fact, 876 police officers--88% of voting union members--voted no confidence.

http://www.policeone.com/pc_print.asp?vid=50033

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/82652_kime14ww.shtml

<http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/mardi02.shtml>

<http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20010302&slug=dead02m0>

<http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20010302&slug=mardigras02m>

http://www.allgov.com/ViewNews/Director_of_Drug_Control_Policy_Who_is_R_Gil_Kerlikowske_90224

The city should have been better prepared to deal with this riot because it had just experienced the WTO riots two years before. Shortly after that riot, the police chief resigned. The mayor, who was sleeping during the riot, was defeated in the following election.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2002/aug/04/magazine/tm-seattle31>



Kris Kime is carried away from the scene in Pioneer Square where he was assaulted. Kime died from his injuries. (February 28, 2001)

Credit: Paul Kitagaki Jr./Seattle Post-Intelligencer



A large crowd blocked the intersection of First Avenue and Yesler Way in Pioneer Square through much of the evening of Fat Tuesday. (February 28, 2001)

Credit: Paul Kitagaki Jr./Seattle Post-Intelligencer



Seattle's Mardi Gras celebrations disintegrated into ugly brawls as the evening progressed. Here, a group of young men beats another man early Wednesday morning as Fat Tuesday celebrations came to a close. (February 28, 2001)

Credit: Mike Urban/Seattle Post-Intelligencer



One man chokes another in one of the many fights that broke out on the streets of Pioneer Square as Seattle's Mardi Gras festivities drew to a close. (February 28, 2001)

Credit: Mike Urban/Seattle Post-Intelligencer