



# Valley Morning Star

Serving the Rio Grande Valley

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2002

www.valleystar.com

50 cents

# Jury: \$35 million

## City found negligent in deaths of Border Patrol agents

### No word about how Harlingen will pay award

By LAURA B. MARTINEZ

Valley Morning Star

**HARLINGEN** — Paying off a \$35 million judgment could create financial difficulties for the city of Harlingen, considering the city's liability insurance is only \$10 million.

A federal jury on Tuesday ruled that negligence on the city's part contributed to the deaths of two U.S. Border Patrol agents and the injury of a Cameron County sheriff's deputy.

The city was ordered to pay \$35 million to families of the victims.

How the jury award might affect the city's bond rating or property tax rates could not be immediately determined, city officials said.

The city plans to appeal the jury's decision, City Manager Roy Rodriguez said, adding that it is too early to say how the city would pay the additional \$25 million should the appeals court uphold the jury's ruling.

"That's a decision that we are going to have to make," Rodriguez said. "That's a policy-making decision which we will be talking about. But again, that's not what we are

Please see 'AWARD,' Page A12



**TRIAL AFTERMATH:** Art Salinas, father of slain Border Patrol Agent Ricardo Salinas, is surrounded by family and attorney Gilbert Rodriguez, husband of slain Border Patrol Agent Susan Rodriguez, her parents, Cameron County Sheriff's Deputy Raul Rodriguez and others were awarded \$35 million.

they, along with Gilbert Rodriguez, husband of slain Border Patrol Agent Susan Rodriguez, her parents, Cameron County Sheriff's Deputy Raul Rodriguez and others were awarded \$35 million.

### Attorney says justice served; appeal planned

By LAURA B. MARTINEZ

Valley Morning Star

**BROWNSVILLE** — A federal jury awarded \$35 million in damages after it determined Tuesday that the city of Harlingen's negligence resulted in the deaths of two U.S. Border Patrol agents and the wounding of a sheriff's deputy.

The ruling came after more than four hours of deliberations in the lawsuit that claimed a police detective's son used a police-issued assault rifle to kill agents Susan Lynn Rodriguez and Ricardo Guillermo Salinas and injury to Cameron County sheriff's deputy Raul Rodriguez in July 1998.

Families of the slain agents wept as the ruling was read. They exchanged hugs and wiped away tears. A "thumbs up" was even exchanged.

"Very, very pleased," is the way Arturo Salinas summed up his feelings outside the federal courthouse.

Salinas is the father of slain agent Ricardo Salinas. He said the jury found the plaintiffs' allegations had merit "and they sided with us."

Immediately after the jury's decision was read, Salinas called his daughter in San Antonio. "I'm so proud of you," he said. "Please see 'VERDICT,' Page A12

Star photo by Ric Vasquez