

Did Titus Hire Hitman to Wack Witnesses?

Contributed by Dave Palumbo
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34-year old, former Clark County Detention Center inmate, Nelson Brady was arrested yesterday (October 19, 2006) on three counts of solicitation of murder. According to the Las Vegas Police department, Brady and Craig Titus hatched a murder plot against three key prosecution witnesses in the upcoming Craig Titus/Kelly Ryan Murder Trial.

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BODYBUILDERS CASE: Murder-for-hire plot alleged

Man suspected of trying to have Titus-Ryan witnesses killed

By GLENN PUIT

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Craig Titus, in court in February, was jailed with a suspect held in a murder-for-hire plot involving witnesses against Titus and wife Kelly Ryan, police say. Neither Titus nor Ryan has been charged in the plot, authorities say.

A man with ties to bodybuilder Craig Titus has been charged with trying to hire a hit man to kill three witnesses in Titus' high-profile murder case.

Titus and his wife, Kelly Ryan, are charged with murder in the December death of their personal assistant, Melissa James, 28.

According to police reports obtained Friday by the Review-Journal, Nelson Ronald Brady Jr. of Las Vegas was arrested this week on three counts of solicitation to commit murder. Detectives allege in the reports that Brady met with an undercover detective posing as a hit man in May, then paid \$1,500 as a down payment to have the three potential witnesses in Titus' murder case killed.

Police reports identified two of the targets as Megan Pierson Foley and her husband, Jeremy Foley. The pair, who are considered crucial witnesses in the case, told a grand jury that Titus and Ryan had made incriminating statements about James' demise.

A third target of the plot, according to police reports, was Anthony Gross, who is charged with helping Titus and Ryan dispose of James' body.

Authorities said Friday night that they had not charged Titus or Ryan in the murder-for-hire plot.

Clark County prosecutor Robert Daskas declined to comment when asked whether anyone else would be charged. Daskas did confirm, however, that Brady and Titus were once housed together at the Clark County Detention Center and that police had recorded phone calls between the two men.

"Titus and Brady were housed together at the Clark County Detention Center, and we have confirmation that when Brady was released from jail, they stayed in telephone contact," Daskas said.

Titus' defense attorney, Marc Saggese, said Titus had nothing to do with any plan to kill witnesses in his case. Saggese described Brady as a drug-addicted loner who was acting on his own.

The attorney said he does not believe Titus will be charged.

"It's smoke and mirrors -- a game," Saggese said. "They know they could not substantiate this. There's not a shred of evidence to support the premise that Craig had anything to do with this."

Ryan's attorney, Greg Denué, said his client has had nothing to do with Brady. "Even if any of this is true, it doesn't show any involvement with my client," Denué said.

In December, James' body was found in Ryan's burning Jaguar off state Route 160.

Titus, 41, and Ryan, 34, are celebrities in the fitness world. Titus is a past place finisher in the Mr. Olympia bodybuilding competition and Ryan is one of the most accomplished female fitness athletes in the nation.

Authorities said the two killed James by beating her, using a Taser on her, drugging her with morphine and duct-taping her face at Titus and Ryan's southwest Las Vegas home. Police allege they then secured the help of Gross in taking James' body into the desert, where it was set ablaze.

Pierson Foley told a grand jury earlier this year that she and her husband were at Titus and Ryan's house in the hours before James' body was found, and that Titus and Ryan made incriminating statements about James' death. Pierson Foley said Ryan told her that during a confrontation with James, she took a Taser gun away from James and used it on her.

"It, I guess, stunned her in the back of her neck, but she (Ryan) didn't have it (the Taser) up high enough, so it just kind of got her attention," Pierson Foley told the grand jury.

"Kelly tried to do it again, and she, I guess she didn't have the voltage up high enough, so she yelled for Craig, and Craig came upstairs, picked Melissa up, brought her downstairs into the living room and supposedly body slammed her and started beating her up," Pierson Foley testified.

Ryan told Pierson Foley that after the beating, James "took a Xanax" and went to bed, Pierson Foley testified.

"While she was sleeping, Kelly went into her room and punched her in the face," Pierson Foley said.

"She (Ryan) said that she punched her a couple of times, she showed me the marks on her knuckles from it, and she said that ... Craig was holding her down and told Kelly to get the morphine and she shot a whole needle of morphine into her leg," Pierson Foley testified.

Later that evening, Titus demonstrated for Pierson Foley "how you can strangle somebody," and then he demonstrated a choke hold for Pierson Foley, according to her grand jury testimony. "He did it on me, and you instantly stop breathing,"

Pierson Foley said.

"Craig just walked in and started talking about it and, that's how, he started talking more about how he said that he killed Melissa," Pierson Foley said.

According to police reports, in March police developed an informant at the Clark County Detention Center named Deem Cassim. Cassim is jailed for the December 2004 robbery of 2004 World Series of Poker champion Greg "Fossilman" Raymer outside his Bellagio Hotel room.

Cassim told homicide detectives that he had been approached by Brady, a fellow inmate, "for the contract killing of Anthony Gross and the possible contract killing of two other witnesses in the case against Craig Titus and Kelly Ryan," police reports state.

"Cassim believed Brady and Titus were in contact with each other, had discussed details of Titus' case, and discussed what needed to be done with Gross," a police affidavit states. "Cassim said Brady gave him details about the use of a Taser only the police and Titus would know."

Cassim explained to Brady how the killings could be coordinated from inside the detention center, according to the reports. Cassim would contact a hit man on the outside, and when Brady was released, he would meet with a go-between and "provide them with an envelope containing the up front money, a picture of Gross, Gross' address, and the names of any bars or clubs Gross frequented."

When Brady was released from custody, several phone calls between Brady and Cassim were recorded by police. In one phone call, the men discussed financing the slayings and the need for the hit man to provide proof of the victims' killings by producing photos of their dead bodies.

Two separate meetings between Brady and the go-between, an undercover detective, were set up at an area Starbucks, police reports state. Brady failed to show up to both meetings.

According to police reports, Brady did show up at a third meeting with the undercover detective and produced two envelopes containing \$500 each. In a meeting that was taped by police, Brady was heard discussing how one of the envelopes was for a "book publication."

When detectives later opened the envelopes, they found the money, a photo of Gross and personal information about Gross and the Foleys, according to the reports.

In a subsequent meeting with the undercover detective, Brady produced \$500 more and wrote down an address where photos of the dead bodies could be sent, according to police.

According to police reports, Titus spoke with Brady twice by phone from the Clark County Detention Center during the investigation and the conversations were taped.

In one conversation, Titus and Brady talk about a "book publishing deal," according to the reports.

"Brady said that he had been on the Internet to see which characters are going to be in the book," according to a police affidavit. "Brady says he knows how to keep those characters from being in his book. Titus said, 'Yeah. No (expletive). Yeah, from the screen play, yeah.'"

The two men also discussed money briefly, and Titus mentioned a "publisher," according to authorities.

"Brady says yeah, but they want some money, and I've been trying to drum up money to get these people to give their stories, and that's what I need help with," according to a police affidavit. "Brady says he needs 'ten.' Brady tells Titus he is going to walk."

A second phone conversation between Titus and Brady was recorded on May 19, the day of the second meeting between Brady and the undercover detective, according to police.

"Brady tells Titus he is taken care of," a police affidavit stated. "Brady says he is talking about 'the book.' Brady tells Titus they will be making money on that book. He tells Titus that the book has been paid for. Titus changes the subject.

"Titus tells Brady the types of vehicles that targets 'number two' (Megan) and 'number three' Jeremy drive," the affidavit said. "Brady says 'That's not going to be an issue, those two, anyway.'"

Daskas said Friday night that police made sure the three targets of the plot were never in danger.

"We have zero tolerance for someone who's willing to manipulate the outcome of a prosecution by harming citizens who provide information to law enforcement," Daskas said. "Both Metro homicide detectives and our office have monitored this particular situation very closely for several months to ensure that these witnesses were never in harm's way."

Titus and Ryan are scheduled to go to trial in January.

Review-Journal writer David Kihara contributed to this report.