

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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Former New Brunswick Official Already Serving Prison Sentence  
Pleads Guilty to Murder-for-Hire Plot Targeting His Wife

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(More)

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CAMDEN – A former New Brunswick official serving a federal prison sentence for accepting more than \$30,000 in bribes pleaded guilty today to attempting to hire a hit man to murder his wife, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Richard Kaplan, 58, of New Brunswick, admitted before U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas that he pursued the murder-for-hire plot through a fellow inmate at the Federal Correctional Institution in Fairton in Cumberland County. The fellow inmate alerted authorities and became a cooperating witness in the FBI undercover investigation, which led to a criminal complaint on April 3 charging Kaplan with the murder plot.

At the time, Kaplan, formerly a New Brunswick city construction inspector and zoning officer, was serving a 30-month sentence at Fairton for his guilty plea on April 20, 2007, to taking more than \$30,000 in bribes.

Kaplan pleaded guilty today to using the mail (a facility of interstate commerce) in the commission of murder for hire. The maximum statutory penalty is 10 years in federal prison. However, under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Kaplan faces a sentencing range of between 108 and 135 months in prison, in addition to the sentence he is currently serving.

“For his remorseless efforts to kill his wife, Mr. Kaplan can now look forward to a much longer and well-deserved stay in federal prison,” said Christie.

Kaplan admitted that he wanted his wife dead because of money issues and the belief that she was “conspiring” with her family against Kaplan since he entered prison last October, following his sentencing on Sept. 6.

Kaplan admitted that not long after arriving at the prison, and over the course of several months, he began telling the fellow inmate that he wanted to find someone who could kill Kaplan’s wife and make it look like an accident. Kaplan admitted that he told the fellow inmate that he was willing to pay \$25,000, including a good-faith down payment of \$2,000, for the murder.

Kaplan admitted that he told his fellow inmate – and later an undercover FBI agent whom Kaplan believed was the hit man he was hiring – that he wanted his wife to be killed in a staged car accident.

Kaplan admitted that he sent a letter to a post office box instructing the “hit man” – for whom Kaplan had made up the name “Robert Grooms” – that he wanted to go forward with the plan to kill his wife. He said he sent a second letter to his accountant giving the accountant “power of attorney,” and directing the accountant to have \$2,000 from Kaplan’s out-of-state bank account sent to New Jersey to then give to the hit man.

Finally, Kaplan admitted that, on March 30, he met with the undercover agent posing as the hit man at the federal prison and reiterated his desire to have his wife murdered. Kaplan admitted that he understood that once the meeting was over, the deal with the hit man was complete and there was no going back.

Kaplan admitted that, during the same meeting, he said he would pay the hit man the remaining balance of the murder-for-hire fee after his wife was killed.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, and Special Agents of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rene Febles, with the investigation leading to the charges against Kaplan. Christie also thanked the federal Bureau of Prisons, specifically officials at Fairton, for their assistance as well as assistance from the New Brunswick Police Department.

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Defense counsel: Scott Resnik, Esq., New York