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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Man Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison In Murder-For-Hire Plot - Plan Unraveled by Federal Agents, No One Was Hurt -

WASHINGTON - Melvin Taplet, Jr., 49, formerly of Elkton, Maryland, was sentenced today to 10 years in prison on a federal charge stemming from a foiled murder-for-hire plot, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and John P. Torres, Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

A jury convicted Taplet in February 2011 of the charge of use of a facility in interstate commerce to commit murder-for-hire. The verdict followed a trial in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The Honorable Judge Richard J. Leon, who sentenced Taplet, also ordered that the defendant be placed on three years of supervised release upon completion of the prison term. In addition, the judge ordered Taplet to refrain from contacting the victim in the case.

According to the government's evidence, in August of 2008, Taplet was at a truck stop in Elkton, Maryland, where he met a man he knew only as "Jay." After a short conversation, Taplet told the man that he had been in a romantic relationship with a woman who lived in Maine.

Taplet claimed that a female friend of his former girlfriend had sabotaged his relationship, and therefore he wanted the friend killed. The defendant offered "Jay" a \$1,500 "down payment" to commit the murder. However, unbeknownst to the defendant, ICE was investigating the case.

Over the next few months, Taplet had multiple telephone conversations and meetings with "Jay." During these conversations, Taplet urged "Jay" to kill his ex-girlfriend's friend in exchange for \$7,000. Taplet provided him with the friend's photograph and address. Taplet also said that he did not care how the friend was killed but that he wanted her to suffer. He described

where the friend lived, what she looked like, and the type of car she drove. Taplet said that the body should be dumped in woods an hour from her apartment to avoid detection.

While the defendant, a trained welder, never gave money to “Jay,” he did some work for him as a partial payment for the supposed agreement to murder the friend. The plot was unraveled with Taplet’s arrest before anyone was harmed.

“This defendant wanted to pay \$7,000 for a murder,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “Thanks to the efforts of law enforcement, the plan was thwarted and now the defendant will have 10 years in prison to consider the consequences of his murder-for-hire plan.”

“The outstanding work of our Homeland Security Investigation agents in conjunction with our state and local partners enabled us to stop a murder before it was carried out,” said Special Agent in Charge Torres.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen and Special Agent in Charge Torres praised the investigative efforts of those who worked on the case for ICE HSI. They also commended the outstanding work of U.S. Attorney’s Office Paralegal Specialist Brendan Tracz. Finally, they thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Scarpelli, who prosecuted the case.

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