

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 14, 2008

Plainfield Man Sentenced to 87 Months in Prison for Killing U.S.
Companion in Pakistan in Attempt to Loot Estate

(More)

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NEWARK – A Plainfield man was sentenced to 87 months in federal prison today for the killing of his live-in companion while on vacation in Pakistan, as part of an attempt to benefit from the homicide by collecting assets of the man’s estate, including his home, life insurance and retirement savings, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Dennis M. Cavanaugh also ordered Khawar Gardazi, 32, to pay \$50,000 in restitution to the victim’s family and a \$50,000 fine. Gardazi has remained in custody since his arrest at his parents’ Woodbridge home on June 21, 2007.

On Dec. 20, 2007, Gardazi pleaded guilty to a two-count criminal Information charging him with Foreign Killing of a United States National and wire fraud in connection with the death of Nicolas Queune, 52, and the attempt to take control of Queune’s estate.

Gardazi was first arrested on a criminal Complaint for his attempt to loot Queune’s estate by, among other things, claiming Queune had died of natural causes and presenting a photocopied, fraudulent death certificate for Queune. The continuing investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s Office and FBI led to Gardazi’s guilty plea, which included the admissions by Gardazi that he killed Queune during an argument in Pakistan, buried the body there and attempted to fraudulently take control of the estate.

Gardazi is a U.S. citizen, born in Pakistan. Queune was born in France and had dual U.S./French citizenship.

At his plea hearing, Gardazi told Judge Cavanaugh that, after meeting Queune in about 2005, the two formed a relationship and began living together at Queune’s home in Plainfield.

In December 2006, Gardazi asked an attorney to draft a will for Queune and a trust in Gardazi’s name. Upon Queune’s death, the trust was to receive Queune’s real property, worth approximately \$500,000, and other death benefits (including Queune’s federal Thrift Savings Plan account which was valued at \$152,000) and federal employee retirement funds. Queune had worked for the Veterans Administration in Lyons.

Gardazi stated that on Jan 6, 2007, he and Queune boarded an airplane en route from JFK International Airport to Lahore, Pakistan. Customs records do not show Queune ever leaving Pakistan. After they arrived, on Jan. 7, Gardazi stated that the two men stayed in a house in Valenciatown, Pakistan, that had been rented by Gardazi’s brother, identified in the Information as “N.H.”

On Jan. 10, Gardazi admitted he and Queune had a violent argument, during which Gardazi killed Queune, by shoving him and causing him to strike his head and die instantly.

Gardazi told Judge Cavanaugh, that after killing Queune, he realized that he could profit from his death. First, Gardazi said that N.H. assisted him, by transporting Nicholas Queune’s body to a rural area outside Lahore, where it was buried in a field, to conceal his death from authorities.

Prior news releases on Gardazi's arrest and guilty plea are available by following the appropriate links on the U.S. Attorney's website at:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

In determining the sentence, Judge Cavanaugh consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, was not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading to Gardazi's arrest and guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant United States Attorney Deborah J. Gannett of the U.S. Attorney Office's Public Protection unit, in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Michael Pedecini, Esq. Newark