



TODAY'S SUNBEAM

2 charged in murder-for-hire plot

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SALEM An inmate at the Salem County Correctional Facility and his mother-in-law have been charged with conspiracy to commit murder in an alleged murder-for-hire plot, the Salem County Prosecutor's Office announced Friday.

Mildred Cullinan, 75, of Hagerville Road in Elsinboro and James Lindorff, 58, of Lower Alloways Creek, allegedly plotted to kill an unidentified witness against Lindorff.

Cullinan is being held without bail.

According to officials, the unidentified witness had at one point attested that James Lindorff abused his six adopted children, one of whom died in 2001. Lindorff is currently serving a 364-day sentence after he pled guilty to endangering the welfare of a child and contempt of a judicial order on May 18 in Salem County, with sentencing being passed down July 24. The witness's knowledge of the alleged abuse apparently played a pivotal role in Lindorff's decision to plead guilty in the case against him, authorities said.

Lindorff's wife, Cullinan's daughter, is serving prison time for child endangerment.

According to Salem County Prosecutor John T. Lenahan, the investigation of Cullinan and James Lindorff began when police learned that, while in jail, James Lindorff was allegedly actively soliciting the murder of the witness. He was allegedly offering to pay for the killing and provide a weapon for the potential murder, authorities said. His mother-in-law, Cullinan, provided a link to the outside in the alleged plot, according to authorities.

An undercover detective posing as the would-be assassin met with Cullinan at King Chicken on Yorke Street in Salem City Thursday afternoon, establishing probable cause and leading to the arrests, authorities said.

The intended victim had been notified of the alleged plot prior to the Thursday arrests and had been placed under protective custody by members of the Salem County Prosecutor's Office's Detective Division.

Officials said that in a search of a residence on New Bridge Road in Lower Alloways Creek belonging to a relative of Cullinan, a handgun allegedly intended to be the alleged murder weapon was located. As of Friday no charges have been filed against the owner of the house, officials said.

"These arrests were the result of 10 days worth of extensive investigation, part of a combined effort of county law enforcement agents and the New Jersey State Police at Woodstown," Lenahan said.

James Lindorff and his wife, Heather Lindorff, are both serving sentences stemming from the death of one of their six adopted children from Russia.

In 2000 the Lindorffs took custody of three girls and in 2001 they took in three boys, who ranged in ages from 5-years-old to 16-years-old when they came to live with the Lindorffs.

On Dec. 14, 2001, 5-year-old Jacob Lindorff died from what medical examiners determined was blunt force trauma to the head, which police said was delivered by his mother. The boy also had second-degree burns on his feet and hemorrhaging in one eye.

Heather Lindorff is currently serving a six-year prison sentence for child endangerment at the Edna Mahon Correctional Facility for Women in Hunterdon County. As a result of the case, James Lindorff was given probation after being convicted of fourth-degree child abuse.

After the 2003 conviction, custody of the children was handed over to Cullinan, with specific orders that visits by the Lindorffs had to be supervised and could not be overnight. County investigators determined that the Lindorffs defied the order, and all three were charged with disobeying the judge's order. At that time Heather Lindorff was released from jail while awaiting an appeal, though violating the judge's order sent her back.

"It's a bizarre family and a bizarre history surrounding them, and these are serious first-degree charges levied against them," said Lenahan. "Through the diligence of our detectives and a few unique investigative tactics, tragedy was avoided in this case."

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