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ANATOMY OF A HIT

Unsealed documents begin to unravel mystery of Markel killing as TPD makes its case

THE VICTIM

Dan Markel, an esteemed Florida University Law School professor, was shot in the head while behind the wheel of his parked car in the garage of his Trescott Drive home in Betton Hills the morning of July 18, 2014.



Dan Markel

THE ACCUSED HIT MEN

Police say Sigfredo Garcia, a career felon, and Luis Rivera, a top Latin Kings gang member, drove from North Miami in a rented Toyota Prius the afternoon of July 16, 2014, and spent two nights in Tallahassee motels. Garcia, who was arrested on murder charges last week, maintains he's innocent. An arrest warrant has been drafted but not yet served on Rivera, who is serving a more than 12-year federal prison sentence for unrelated racketeering charges.



Sigfredo Garcia



Luis Rivera

THE LINK

Katherine Magbanua is listed as a business associate of Garcia on state documents and is the mother of his two children. He called her cellphone 2,700 times in the 2½ months before and just after Markel's killing, investigators say. Around the time of the alleged murder-for-hire, the investigation found Magbanua was in a personal relationship with Wendi Adelson's brother, Charles Adelson. Call records showed she was one of his "top contacts."



Katherine Magbanua

THE MOTIVE

Markel and his ex-wife, Wendi Adelson, also an FSU law professor, from whom he was recently divorced, were engaged in a bitter custody dispute over her desire to move their two boys with her to South Florida to be closer to her family. Email evidence, investigators found, showed Wendi's parents, especially her mother, Donna, wanted her daughter to "coerce" Markel into allowing the move. Her brother Charles, the court records noted, didn't like his former brother-in-law and did not get along with him. The probable cause summed up the motive: "Investigators believe the motive for this murder stemmed from the desperate desire of the Adelson family to relocate Wendi and the children to South Florida, along with the pending court hearing that might have impacted their access to the grandchildren."



Charles Adelson



Wendi Adelson



Donna Adelson

Prius trailed Dan Markel on final morning

SEAN ROSSMAN
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

The slaying of Dan Markel started at a North Miami Beach rental car company. Three days later, the well-known scholar and Florida State University law professor was found with a bullet wound to the head, slumped over in his car.

The Prius, long known as the "vehicle of interest" in the 41-year-old father of two's killing, is what investigators now say Luis Rivera, 33, and Sigfredo Garcia, 34, drove to Tallahassee in mid-July 2014.

It was seen in the parking lot of Premier Health and Fitness on Maclay Boulevard as Markel exercised. It was spotted at a government building, a bank and a store along Markel's route for morning errands. Earlier in the week, it was spotted in the Ashford Club apartment complex behind Markel's Trescott Drive home, where it's believed they scouted the area.

After Markel was shot in his garage it was seen backing out of his driveway.

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Document drop reveals split between TPD, state attorney.
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Walk in the footsteps of the Markel slaying suspects on this tour with news director Jennifer Portman.

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Ex-wife's family implicated in murder plot

KARL ETTERS
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Family members of Dan Markel's ex-wife are implicated in a murder-for-hire scheme that ended in the legal scholar's July 2014 killing.

An arrest affidavit — unexpectedly unsealed Thursday — points to Wendi Adelson's brother Charlie Adelson, a Fort Lauderdale cosmetic dentist, and her mother, Donna Adelson, who works at the family's practice. Investigators say the motive for the slaying "stemmed from the desperate desire of the Adelson family" that Wendi and the couple's two young sons be allowed to move to South Florida.

The information tying the family to the killing is described under the title "Motive for Murder" in the arrest affidavit for Sigfredo Garcia, 34, arrested last week in the shooting of the Florida State University law professor at his Betton Hills home.

The charging document also notes an upcoming court hearing that might have forbidden Wendi Adelson's mother from having unsupervised time

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