



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Man Found Guilty of Federal Charges in Murder-For-Hire Plot - Plan Unraveled by Federal Agents, No One Was Hurt -**

WASHINGTON - Melvin Taplet, Jr., 49, formerly of Elkton, Maryland, was found guilty today of a federal charge stemming from a 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 of the charge of use of a facility in interstate commerce to commit murder-for-hire. The verdict followed a trial in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The Honorable Judge Richard J. Leon scheduled sentencing for May 31, 2011. At sentencing, the defendant faces maximum penalties of 10 years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

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 Jay 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, the defendant 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 Jay with the friend's photograph and address. He also told Jay how to kill the victim and dispose of her body.

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

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

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