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**TWO CHICAGO AREA MEN ARRESTED ON EXTORTION-RELATED
CHARGES INVOLVING ALLEGED PLOT TO ABDUCT AND MURDER VICTIM**

CHICAGO — Two Chicago area men were arrested last night and charged today with attempted extortion and extortion conspiracy involving an alleged plot to abduct, extort, murder, and dismember a victim whom they believed had access to large amounts of cash generated from commercial real estate holdings. The arrests followed an undercover FBI investigation during which the intended victim, who was not identified, was never exposed to any immediate danger.

Steven Mandell, formerly known as “Steven Manning,” 61, of Buffalo Grove, and **Gary Engel**, 61, of Homer Glenn, were each charged with attempted extortion and conspiracy to commit extortion in a criminal complaint filed today in U.S. District Court. They were scheduled to appear at 11 a.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown.

The arrests and charges were announced by Gary S. Shapiro, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and William C. Monroe, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The investigation is continuing, they said.

The defendants were arrested last evening after they traveled to the vicinity of the planned abduction on the city’s northwest side. According to the complaint affidavit, both men possessed what appeared to be “prop” firearms and various fake law enforcement credentials. Engel also

possessed handcuffs and Mandell also possessed a fake arrest document that appeared to name the victim as a criminal defendant. After the arrests, FBI agents searched the location where the defendants allegedly planned to carry out their plans and seized a loaded .22 caliber semi-automatic pistol and additional ammunition, as well as saws, a butcher knife, and multiple zip-ties suitable for use as restraints.

Mandell, a former Chicago police officer for approximately 10 years until 1983, and Engel, a former Willow Springs police officer, allegedly intended to abduct the victim, referred to as “Soupie” or “Soupie Sales,” while posing as law enforcement officers purporting to “arrest” the victim while the victim attended a meeting with another person identified only as Individual A. They allegedly planned to take the victim to a nearby office location, referred to in the affidavit as “Club Med,” where they planned to carry out the extortion and murder after Mandell drove the victim’s car to the victim’s residence to make it appear that the victim had disappeared after returning home from the meeting with Individual A. The defendants planned to extort the victim to turn over cash and some 25 commercial real estate holdings before murdering the victim, the complaint alleges.

During the investigation, which included audio and video recordings, Mandell speculated that the victim generated as much as \$100,000 a month in cash from rental properties. At one time, Mandell and Engel allegedly discussed demanding at least \$500,000 from the victim to be released, while still planning to murder the victim.

During the last month, Mandell arranged to outfit the “Club Med” location with a large deep sink, a long counter capable of supporting several hundred pounds, and a shower. He took possession of the extortion location this past Monday, and met there with Engel over the next three

days to plan how they would abduct the victim while posing as police officers, how they would restrain the victim, and dismember the victim after the extortion and murder.

On Oct. 10, Mandell discussed the abduction and extortion with Individual A, saying, “My guy knows what he’s doing, he knows how to waterboard, do interrogation, psy-ops,” according to the affidavit. When Mandell and Engel met at the extortion location this week, they allegedly discussed using the counter and sink area to drain the victim’s blood before dismembering the body.

The affidavit describes Mandell discussing the plot with Individual A initially on Sept. 22, followed by additional discussions in late September and throughout this month. On Oct. 4, Mandell and Individual A traveled to a vacant office space to discuss how the location could be renovated to use for the extortion.

Attempted extortion and extortion conspiracy each carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. If convicted, the Court must impose a reasonable sentence under federal statutes and the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Amarjeet Bhachu and Diane MacArthur.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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