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Ellis tied to 'escort service'

Prosecutor: Threat to witness linked to risk of exposure

By MIKE FITZGERALD
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Kelvin Ellis, the East St. Louis director of regulatory affairs, conspired to discredit, then murder, a federal witness because she had threatened to expose a prostitution ring Ellis was running out of City Hall.

A federal prosecutor made that allegation during Ellis' detention hearing to determine whether he would be released on bond pending upcoming trials on charges of obstruction of justice, witness tampering and tax evasion.

At the end of the 90-minute hearing Friday, U.S. Magistrate Clifford Proud ordered that Ellis remain in jail, finding that the evidence arrayed against him is "powerful" and "compelling."

Proud based the decision to keep Ellis, 55, in jail on a series of audio- and videotapes that Deputy Police Chief Rudy McIntosh, a government informant, secretly made in October and November while allegedly conspiring with Ellis to plant drugs on a prostitute and drug abuser known as "Jane Doe."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Hal Goldsmith played parts of the tapes in open court to support his argument that Ellis' plot to

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ZIA NIZAMI/News-Democrat

Prosecutors: Ellis plotted to discredit, then kill, witness who threatened to expose East St. Louis City Hall prostitution ring

Devising the scheme

Kelvin Ellis allegedly began cooking up the scheme to discredit a government witness named "Jane Doe" on Oct. 6.

During a conversation with East St. Louis Deputy Police Chief Rudy McIntosh, a government informant, Ellis discussed the need to "kill any credibility she got," according to a secretly record audiotape made with McIntosh's help. "Which is easy," Ellis added. "I mean, 'cause she's a prostitute using grass."

Ellis provided McIntosh with the woman's last-known residence, a Caseyville motel, where she was trading sex for money.

"Ah, hah, she's whoring out of there," Ellis said. "Do what we can to take her ass off the street.... I want her credibility destroyed. The bitch is going to destroy us."

Plotting details

One videotape, made in November with a hidden camera, showed McIntosh and Ellis seated in McIntosh's city-issued police cruiser and discussing plans for planting illegal drugs on the woman.

McIntosh reached into his pants pocket. He held out to the camera a rock of crack. "This is an automatic 10 years in prison," McIntosh said.

Threat to ESL's power structure

In another audiotape, Ellis explained the threat that Jane Doe posed to the power structure in East St. Louis.

Ellis said the federal probe was focused on four "targets": himself, City Council members Charlie Powell and Eddie Lee Jackson, and Lonzo Greenwood, the president of the East St. Louis Board of Education.

Ellis predicted all four would be indicted by a federal grand jury. "Right now we're playing for all the marbles," he said.

Faking a homicide

By late November, Ellis had approved a plan that called for McIntosh to kill the woman.

With the help of FBI agents, prosecutors faked a photograph depicting the nearly nude body of the woman lying supine in a field near Horseshoe Lake in Madison County.

Prosecutors then played another videotape made with a hidden camera showing McIntosh behind the wheel of his police cruiser, with Ellis in the front passenger seat.

The date: Nov. 24 — less than 12 hours after the faked murder McIntosh had agreed to set up.

"If she's going to testify, she's going to testify from the bottom of Horseshoe Lake," McIntosh said.

"My man!" Ellis exclaimed.

When McIntosh showed Ellis the photograph, Ellis responded: "Our problem's over."

Legislators taking aim at exodus of doctors

Bill provides for caps on damages

By PATRICK J. POWERS
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Metro-east lawmakers on Tuesday plan to unveil legislation aimed at keeping doctors from leaving Illinois that includes a controversial cap on "pain and suffering" jury awards.

"I just believe that caps are part of the solution," said state Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton, a co-sponsor of the legislation. "We have to keep the issue very much in the public's eye and that means bringing bills forward."

The proposed legislation would protect a physician's personal assets, increase qualifications for expert witnesses, enhance oversight of the insurance industry and cap noneconomic damages at \$250,000 in lawsuits against physicians and \$500,000 in lawsuits against hospitals.

"Everything is on the table at the beginning of this legislative session," said state Rep. Tom Holbrook, D-Bellefonte. "It's a crisis here and this is a top priority."

However, critics said legislation with caps isn't the answer and reminded its supporters the Illinois Supreme Court previously ruled them unconstitutional. Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan previously said he wouldn't call a bill that included caps to the floor because of the constitutionality question.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich previously said he wouldn't sign a bill that included them.

"The governor will take a look at what they're talking about, but the Supreme Court has already ruled on the issue," Blagojevich spokesman Rebecca Rausch said.

Supporters of the measure hope the recent election of Republican Lloyd Karmeier to the Supreme Court will change the previous ruling to their favor.

"Including caps is a step in the right direction to bringing stability to the insurance market," said Harry Maier, president of Memorial Hospital in Belleville.

Local hospitals estimate more than 161 physicians have fled, or have plans to flee, their metro-east practices, in part be-

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Guilty verdict in fatal crash could net 60-year term

Jury rejects bid for reckless homicide

By JAYNE MATTHEWS
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A traffic death in Granite City 13 months ago was a first-degree murder, a Madison County jury ruled Friday.

Career burglar Richard Alsup, 28, who fled police to avoid going back to prison, now faces as many as 60 years behind bars.

Alsup's run from the law in Florissant, Mo., led him 28 miles to Granite City and into the path of a car driven by John Smith, 32, Granite City.

Smith died instantly on Dec. 2, 2003, when Alsup's stolen van — going 65 mph — rammed Smith's Chevrolet Camero in the intersection of West Pontoon and Nameoki roads.

Alsup drove more than 100 mph at times during the 30-minute chase. He ignored all traffic signals and ran other cars off the road.

A traffic fatality "is not the normal first-degree (murder) fact pattern," but was the right charge in the Smith case, Madison County State's Attorney Bill



Alsup

Mudge said after the verdict.

"We're glad the jury saw it our way and that the Smith family has some justice," Mudge said.

Jurors took fewer than 90 minutes to reject defense lawyers' plea to convict Alsup of reckless homicide. The penalty for the less serious charge ranges from probation to 14 years in prison.

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STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

Skip Smith talks to reporters Friday at the Madison County Courthouse after Richard Alsup was convicted of murder.

Fairview Heights contract talks with union reach impasse

Health insurance payments sticking point

By RAMONA CURTIS
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Fairview Heights city leaders and union employees could not reach a contract agreement after meeting for almost four hours Friday afternoon, but they agreed to keep talking.

"We were just at an impasse and could not settle at this time," said Fairview Heights Mayor Gail Mitchell.

Mitchell said contract negotiators requested a meeting with all City Council members. The council meets Tuesday and will decide then when to meet with

the union.

The 45 city employees who are part of the Operating Engineers Local 148 have been working under a one-year contract extension since their contract ended May 1. The union has filed an official grievance with the Illinois Labor Relations Board and voted in December to approve a strike.

Union officials are looking for the city to reconfigure the way prescription drugs are priced in a new health plan for city employees. They are also requesting a \$1,000 cap on the amount members pay in out-of-pocket medical expenses.

City leaders increased the employees' contributions this year to offset annual insurance costs

increases. In the past four years, Fairview Heights has seen its health insurance costs jump 37 percent yet employee contributions have remained the same.

Employees currently pay nothing to insure themselves but contribute \$40 a month to cover dependents, which is among the lowest paid by municipal employees in the metro-east.

Coming Sunday

Metro-east athletes and coaches say steroid use isn't a problem in the area, although officials are on the lookout for signs of the illegal performance-enhancing drugs.



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LOTTERY FOR ILLINOIS

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- Pick 4-Midday: **6-2-8-5** Jackpot: **\$13.5 million**

FOR MISSOURI

- Pick 3-Midday: **0-8-9**; Evening: **7-2-7**
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MEGA MILLIONS Game: **25-31-39-47-52** Mega Ball: **43** Jackpot: **\$18 million**

