

# The Huntsville Times

## White had plan, FBI says

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BIRMINGHAM - Former Decatur police investigator Faron White and his girlfriend talked about starting a new life in Las Vegas before his arrest there, an FBI investigator testified Friday.

Friday's arraignment offered details about how White, with a recent bankruptcy filing over his head and his marriage on the rocks, schemed with a woman he worked with to fake his death and flee to Las Vegas.

White, 48, was indicted Wednesday on a charge of stealing more than \$5,000 from the Decatur Police Department and was denied bond Friday by a federal judge who labeled him a flight risk.

Under questioning by U.S. Attorney David Estes, FBI agent Patrick Stokes said authorities were led to White's location after confronting White's work girlfriend, 29-year-old Sarah Richardson, about records of phone calls she had with someone in Las Vegas. She first told police she last saw White at Decatur's organized crime office, where he worked.

Stokes said she later cooperated and told how she drove him to the Nashville airport after faking his disappearance. According to Stokes, White spent the night with Richardson before his flight and they talked about her joining him later in Las Vegas.

"She was going to transfer to a new job where she and Mr. White would resume the relationship," Stokes testified. Stokes said Richardson told police she spoke with White several times while he was hiding out in Las Vegas to keep him abreast of the police search back home.

"She told him to turn himself in and he agreed to but kept saying one more day, one more day," Stokes told the court. When Richardson told him she would no longer "lie for him," he immediately switched hotels in Las Vegas and registered at the second one under the name James Jackson, from a drivers' license he used for undercover work.

Stokes said Richardson told police he hid \$2,500 in each shoe in case he had to make a "quick getaway."

U.S. marshals arrested White without incident in the parking lot of a Hampton Inn in Las Vegas, Stokes said. U.S. Magistrate Judge Harwell Davis III ordered White to remain in federal custody until his trial.

On Friday, Davis rejected testimony from witnesses called by White's attorney that he was not a suicide or flight risk and had family willing to post their property as bond to ensure his court appearances.

Prosecutors claimed White may try to kill himself if freed. Testimony confirmed by family members revealed he attempted suicide years ago when his first wife left him.

Davis said the boldness of his alleged theft and getaway scheme make him wary.

White "in my opinion, is incredibly self-absorbed and I cannot help from believing" he could do it again, Davis said at White's arraignment.

Davis cited FBI testimony that White had recently filed bankruptcy, stole as much as \$60,000 from his department, faked an abduction, and fled to Las Vegas under a fake name.

White's attorney, Jake Watson of Huntsville, said after the ruling he is disappointed the court denied bond for his client. "But knowing the nature of the allegation, despite the judge saying it was a 'tough call,' we just

fell on the wrong side of his opinion," Watson said.

White, Decatur's 2007 officer of the year, was arrested in Las Vegas last month after authorities received a tip his disappearance was a hoax.

White's family reported him missing Jan. 3 and police suspected foul play after finding his office in disarray. Police later determined White and Richardson faked a fight in White's office as part of an elaborate plan for him to disappear.

Stokes said White had planned to cut himself and splatter blood in his office along with overturned furniture but couldn't bring himself to it.

White had about \$10,000 on him when U.S. marshals took him in custody in Las Vegas on Jan. 5, including some bills with serial numbers that matched bills seized by Decatur police and stored in a safe under White's control.

Richardson was charged with being an accessory after the fact for helping White after knowing a crime had been committed, authorities said.

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