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U.S.

Man arrested in alleged Schiavo case murder plot

U.S. attorneys: He offered bounty for judge, Michael Schiavo

Friday, March 25, 2005 Posted: 10:58 PM EST (0358 GMT)

(CNN) -- Authorities said a North Carolina man was arrested Friday by FBI agents on charges of soliciting the murder of a judge and the husband of Terri Schiavo, the severely brain-damaged woman at the center of a legal and moral tug of war.

Authorities said Richard Alan Meywes of Fairview, North Carolina, offered \$250,000 for the killing of Michael Schiavo and another \$50,000 for the death of Circuit Court Judge George Greer, who ordered Schiavo's feeding tube removed a week ago.

Meywes was arrested without incident at his home about 5 p.m. on charges of solicitation of murder and sending threatening communications, authorities said.

He is expected to make an initial appearance Monday in U.S. District Court in Asheville. He will remain in the custody of U.S. marshals until then, authorities said.

A conviction on the charges could bring up to 15 years in prison and up to \$500,000 in fines.

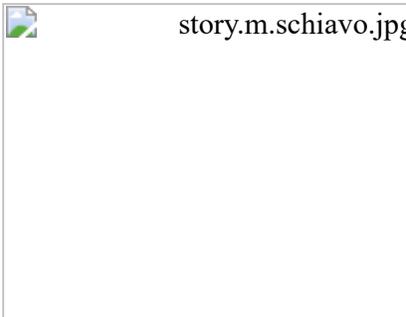
The charges were announced by the two lead prosecutors on the case: Paul Perez, U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Florida; and Gretchen Shappert, U.S. attorney for

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Michael Schiavo, Terri Schiavo's husband and legal guardian, appears on CNN's "Larry King Live" in 2003.

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the Western District of North Carolina.

An affidavit filed in support of the charges alleges that Meywes wrote an e-mail Tuesday that said a "bounty with a price tag of \$250,000 has been taken out on the head of Michael Schiavo." It also alleges he said an "additional \$50,000 has been offered for the elimination of the judge who ruled against Terry in Florida," an apparent reference to Terri Schiavo.

The affidavit also says the same e-mail refers to the recent killings of a judge in Atlanta and family members of a federal judge in Chicago.

Greer, a Pinellas County circuit judge, has been under the protection of two U.S. marshals at all times in recent weeks due to increased threats against his life by those unhappy with his handling of the Schiavo case.

"Mr. Meywes' use of the Internet to convey threats and solicit violent acts is a clear violation of federal law," Perez said in a written statement.

"Regardless of any one person's stance on the complex and heartfelt issues involved in Ms. Schiavo's case, the matter must be resolved within the bounds of our democratic system and rule of law," the statement read. "The use of threats and other scare tactics cannot and will not be tolerated."

Shappert said, "Threats made in interstate commerce will not be ignored by federal law enforcement."

Authorities said the case was a joint investigation by the FBI's Tampa and Charlotte offices, and the Sheriff's Department of Pinellas County, Florida.

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