

US witness ties Whitey Bulger to slaying plot

By Judy Rakowsky
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As charges were unsealed yesterday charging James J. (Whitey) Bulger with extorting money from South Boston drug dealers, a prosecutor in another federal courtroom said that a government witness has implicated Bulger in a 1974 murder conspiracy.

Assistant US Attorney Brian T. Kelly said that Bulger, Bulger co-conspirator John Martorano and co-defendant Steven (The Rifleman) Flemmi conspired to murder James Sousa in 1974.

Kelly made the allegation during a bail hearing for Martorano. Kelly and investigators declined to say who Sousa was or to elaborate on the allegations.

Anthony Ciulla, a witness in organized crime race-fixing cases in the 1970s, is expected to describe the murder conspiracy at a hearing next week. The evidence will be used to try to convince a judge that Martorano, a former fugitive, should be locked up until his trial, prosecutors say.

Martin G. Weinberg, Martorano's lawyer, discounted Ciulla's testimony. "Despite 21 years of cooperation with federal authorities and hundreds of interviews with FBI agents, Anthony Ciulla has never before fabricated this allegation," Weinberg said.

Yesterday's revised indictment augments charges filed against Bulger and Flemmi in January and adds Martorano to the case.

It alleges for the first time that drug dealers were "forced to make extortion payments known as 'rent'" to Bulger and Flemmi's Winter Hill Gang.

Free-lance drug dealers "were subject to physical and economic harm" if they did not pay a cut to Bulger and others, the indictment says.

William David Lindholm, a convicted large-scale marijuana dealer, paid Bulger, Flemmi and James Martorano, John's brother, upwards of \$500,000 on sales of tens of thousands of pounds of marijuana from 1983 to 1991, the indictment alleges.

In the early 1980s, the indictment says, Bulger extorted money from South Boston drug dealers Paul Moore and William Shea. Moore and Lindholm are expected to testify against Bulger.

Shelley Murphy of the Globe staff contributed to this report.