

Prosecutors seeking death penalty for man accused of tossing baby onto I-275

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TAMPA — The Hillsborough State Attorney's Office will seek the death penalty for Richard McTear Jr., who is accused of tossing his ex-girlfriend's 3-month-old son from a moving car onto Interstate 275 last month.

A woman who described herself as the 21-year-old McTear's new girlfriend and fiancée bowed her head and cried Wednesday after a prosecutor announced the state's intentions.

"I know he didn't do it," Ida Williams, 40, said afterward.

Given the nature of the allegations against McTear, the case already has drawn significant media attention. His public defenders argued in court Wednesday that certain information about the case should be reviewed by a judge and possibly withheld from the public to avoid influencing potential jurors.

But Hillsborough Circuit Judge Gregory Holder denied the motion, ruling that the public's right to scrutinize the courts would not prevent McTear from receiving a fair trial.

"At this point in these proceedings, it is premature to characterize the current adverse publicity as a serious and imminent threat to the administration of justice," Holder wrote in his order. "It has not been shown that (the) defendant's right to a fair trial is in any reasonable way threatened by the reports surrounding the trial and the parties."

Authorities say McTear attacked his former girlfriend, Jasmine Bedwell, 17, and her 3-month-old son, Emanuel Wesley Murray, on May 5. They say he threw the baby onto the concrete, drove off with the infant and threw him from a car window.

The child was not his son.

McTear had been accused by other women of stalking, dragging and beating them unconscious, breaking into homes and threatening to kill a child. None of those women, including Bedwell, obtained injunctions against him.

He has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder and other felonies.

After his May 20 court appearance on the charges, McTear called out to Bedwell.

"I love you, Jasmine!" he said as bailiffs led him away.

But McTear apparently has moved on.

Williams of Tampa said she has known McTear for a couple of years and met him through her 17-year-old son, who attended school with him. She said she began a relationship with him after his recent arrest, visiting him frequently in jail.

"I go visit him all the time," she said Wednesday. Jail records show she has visited three times this month.

She wants to marry him, she said. She doesn't believe the charges against him.

"He's too kind to do something like that," Williams said, calling him "beautiful, sweet, kind, gentle."

And God-fearing, she said.

Williams herself was just released from a 303-day jail stay June 3 and is serving a yearlong probation after pleading guilty to cocaine possession and habitually driving with a revoked license. She has served five short prison stints in Florida and has a long list of aliases, including "Ida the Spider."

Tears fell down her cheeks as she spoke. During the hearing, her sniffles could be heard throughout the courtroom.

She said she wishes she could trade places with McTear. Why? "For the love that we both have for each other," she said.

"It's outstanding."