

Broward inmate accused of paying to have husband killed

Martha Walker, suspected in mother's ax killing, also wanted spouse dead, officials say

By Juan Ortega, Sun Sentinel

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FORT LAUDERDALE

From behind bars, Martha Walker tried to arrange her husband's murder, fearing their divorce would revoke her access to his life insurance policy, the Broward Sheriff's Office said Thursday.

Walker, 41, has been in the [Broward County](#) Jail since April 2007, when [Hollywood](#) police arrested her on one count of premeditated murder in the ax slaying of her 76-year-old mother, Carmen Santiago.

Three years later, still in jail, Walker was willing to pay \$2,500 to have her husband in North Carolina killed, the Sheriff's Office said.

As undercover detectives investigated, they gave her a chance to back out of her murder-for-hire plot, but "at no time did she do that," said sheriff's Detective Shane Schroeder. "She made it evident that she wanted him killed."

Her motive was a lump sum that she would have collected from his insurance policy if he died, officials said. With her looming divorce, she feared getting nothing.

The Sheriff's Office said it began an inquiry Sept. 9, when a fellow inmate told a jail deputy that Walker had asked about who she could hire for the slaying. Acting on that tip, detectives arranged a meeting between Walker and a confidential informant to confirm she was seeking a hit man.

According to the Sheriff's Office:

Walker told the informant she wanted her husband "killed in an automobile accident" and left "unrecognizable." Walker was willing to pay \$1,500 up front and \$1,000 after her husband's death.

She arranged for her sister, who did not know about the plot, to withdraw \$1,500 from Walker's bank account. She told her sister the money would go toward hiring legal help for Walker's divorce.

The sister gave the money to an undercover officer in the parking lot of the Paul Rein Detention Center in [Pompano Beach](#), where Walker was jailed. The sister was "innocent and had no knowledge" of the plan, Schroeder said.

"She was a very nice person," Schroeder said.

After the money was exchanged, detectives said they had enough evidence against Walker. She was charged Thursday with conspiracy to commit murder, officials said.

In 2007, officers arrested Walker, of North Carolina, after a sister told investigators she had admitted to using an ax to kill their mother, Hollywood police said.

Investigators found Santiago's bloody body in the bathroom of the house where neighbors said Santiago lived for about 20 years. A separate tip led Hollywood police to Walker in a [Dania Beach](#) hotel.

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