



SOUTH FLORIDA

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## Ex-security worker pleads guilty in 2011 robbery that left Brink's guard dead at Calder

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A former Hollywood man whose life sentence was thrown out after a judge mishandled his initial trial pleaded guilty Monday to new charges in the 2011 murder of an armored truck guard.

Uri Ammar, a former security worker at Calder Casino and Race Course, accepted responsibility for his insider role in the killing of 27-year-old Brink's guard Alvaro Lopez Ramos. The 31-year-old Ammar now faces between 20 and 25 years in prison rather than life.

Ammar pleaded guilty to conspiracy and robbery offenses rather than take his chances on a second trial. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Gilfarb agreed to drop the charge of using a firearm during a violent crime that threatened to send the former Calder security manager to prison for the rest of his life.

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At the Sept. 8 sentencing, Gilfarb will argue that Ammar should be imprisoned for 25 years on the two convictions. The defendant's attorney, Marc Seitles, will counter that he should receive 20 years. U.S. District Judge Ursula Ungaro will have the final say.

Ungaro did not preside over Ammar's original trial in 2012, when a federal jury convicted him of conspiracy, robbery and related firearm offenses, but found him not guilty of playing a role in the murder of the Brink's guard.

After the trial, U.S. District Judge James Lawrence King sentenced Ammar to life in prison. His attorney, Seitles, challenged the outcome at the federal appeals court in Atlanta, which ruled in January that King violated the defendant's right to a speedy trial and concluded that the indictment must be dismissed. Ammar hoped that King would free him. But in February, King threw out the charges while allowing the prosecutor to refile them for a new trial.

Ammar was rearrested at the Miami Federal Detention Center. The constitutional protection against double jeopardy — being charged twice for the same crime — did not apply because the appeals court ruled on a technicality and voided his trial. It's as if the trial never happened, and the prosecution of Ammar started all over again.

In his decision, King acknowledged he made a mistake in not establishing why he ordered Ammar to go to trial more than a year after he was indicted instead of within 70 days under the speedy-trial rule. But the judge also found that the defendant contributed to the delay because he did not ask to be tried separately from four other defendants who agreed to the postponement — including the shooter of the Brink's courier at the Miami Gardens casino.

While the four defendants struck plea deals resulting in sentences of 5 to 50 years in prison, Ammar went to trial by himself in 2012 and was convicted of three of four counts in the indictment.

Prosecutors said Ammar, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, collaborated with other insiders on the robbery plot in August 2011. Ammar, a Calder security worker, escorted the armored truck courier as he was carrying a bag stuffed with \$345,000 in cash.

The shooter, Vladimir Louissant, 30, of Miami Gardens, approached him outside the casino. The courier drew his gun and pointed it at Louissant, who shot first. The Brink's guard returned fire, striking the shooter in the leg. Louissant fired again. Lopez Ramos died from two gunshot wounds to the head.

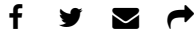
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