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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

# Tatiana Pino nearly died of overdose 2 years before FBI accused Sergio of poisoning her

BY JAY WEAVER AND CATHERINE ODOM

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Sergio and Tatiana Pino in an undated photo. CORTESÍA/ELAINE PALLADINO

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### FBI investigating Sergio Pino

FBI agents raided the residence the well-known home builder as part of a investigation into his alleged connection to threats against his wife Tatiana Pino's life. The pair are in a divorce dispute.

## EXPAND ALL

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Years before the FBI would accuse Miami developer Sergio Pino of trying to poison his wife with fentanyl, Coral Gables police and fire-rescue squads responded to more than 35 calls at the couple's home for reports that Tatiana Pino was suffering from apparent seizures, illness, fainting or breathing problems, according to records covering incidents between late 2019 and early 2022.

One of the last calls involved a near-death experience on Feb. 8, 2022. The couple's adult daughter found Tatiana Pino, now 55, lying on a couch, unconscious and purple, at their waterfront property in Cocoplum. Police officers administered both CPR and a defibrillator and detected a pulse — then a fire-rescue lieutenant gave her Narcan, a medicine that can save someone from a fentanyl or opioid overdose.

The police report noted that Tatiana “apparently overdosed on opioids,” adding that “she also suffers from epilepsy.”

The indication of an overdose, however, did not quite capture the whole picture. Tatiana would soon come to suspect that her husband was trying to [poison her with fentanyl](#), a lethal synthetic heroin that has taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans. She filed for divorce not long after, in April 2022.

The previously unreported overdose at the couple's home came more than two years before the FBI would validate Tatiana's suspicions. This summer, federal agents raided the Cocoplum house twice, later saying they believed Sergio Pino was involved in several attempts to kill his wife, including through poisoning and the

hiring of “murder crews.” Sergio, who was 67, [took his own life](#) in mid-July when the FBI came to arrest him during the second raid in the murder-for-hire investigation.

Nine men have been arrested in the case and are awaiting trial. FBI criminal complaints state that attempts on Tatiana’s life began in 2019, years before the FBI says Sergio hired “murder crews” to kill her. The complaints say Tatiana “had been poisoned with fentanyl through the tampering of her prescribed medication.” The conspiracy charge in the indictment brought against the defendants also cites [alleged attempts to kill Tatiana](#) between June 2022 and July 2024 with cyanide, arsenic and fentanyl, as well as other attempts on her life.

In the couple’s divorce case, Tatiana said in a December 2023 deposition that her mysterious health problems began in July 2019. She said it started with symptoms like nausea and a “weird” taste in her mouth. Her first full-blown “episode,” which resulted in her hospitalization, happened in November 2019, she said.

She recalled medics asking her sister that day if Tatiana was taking drugs because it looked like she was having an overdose. She said during the November episode, she was foaming at the mouth.

Over multiple years of treatment, she received diagnoses including epilepsy and cardiac problems. In 2020, she had a pacemaker implanted, she said during the deposition.

During that time, she testified, her “consistent” bouts of illness kept her “in and out of hospitals.” She said she was unable to take part in the preparations for her older daughter’s wedding, which took place in January 2022.

At one point, Tatiana testified, she hired a nurse to help ease the burden of caring for her, which had largely fallen to her daughters and live-in staff.

“It was just taking a toll on everybody in the home,” Tatiana said during the deposition.

Then, in February 2022, Tatiana experienced a life-threatening respiratory episode and an apparent seizure within about a week of each other, according to Coral Gables police reports and her testimony in the divorce case.

Tatiana recounted those terrifying moments in the December 2023 deposition. She testified that her daughter found her turning purple at her home on Feb. 8, 2022. About a week later, she said, another episode caused her to stop breathing. A close friend of hers called Coral Gables police on Feb. 16 to report that she had another apparent seizure.

Tatiana's divorce attorney, Raymond Rafool, told the Miami Herald that it was not communicated to Tatiana at the time that the Feb. 8 incident was a drug overdose.

Following the events that left her near death, Tatiana testified, "My daughters were at a breaking point." Together with one of their mother's friends and her sisters, Tatiana's two daughters called hospitals across the country, seeking the best experts to treat Tatiana for what they then believed was epilepsy.

In March 2022, she traveled with her sister and her best friend to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore to see a leading epilepsy specialist. But there, she found she didn't have epilepsy at all. Her doctor was confounded by her symptoms and advised that she go off all her medications.

"He said that whatever was happening to me was not epilepsy," Tatiana said during the deposition.

During her visit to Johns Hopkins, the hospital conducted a screening of her blood for fentanyl as part of a routine policy; at the time, the protocol was to test all patients for the synthetic opioid because of a spike in overdose cases at the Baltimore medical center. The result of her screening came as a shock: Tatiana had significant levels of fentanyl in her system. The revelation left only one possible explanation in Tatiana's mind. She believed her husband was trying to poison her.

"I believe that the only person that had had any kind of access or reason would be him," Tatiana testified in December 2023.

When asked if her doctors explicitly told her that they thought she was being poisoned, she said they didn't. She added that her doctors were "dumbfounded" by the discovery.

"No, they haven't said it. They can't explain it," Tatiana testified. "They're very alarmed of what happened, and they feel like they failed me."

But starting in 2023, Tatiana and her attorney raised repeated suspicions in the divorce proceedings that Sergio Pino was trying to kill his wife by tampering with her medications.

"Tatiana has never voluntarily taken any narcotics, opioids or fentanyl," Rafool told the Herald on Wednesday. At the time of her apparent February 2022 overdose, "she had no idea there was fentanyl in her medication. It was only after the Johns Hopkins visit that she realized it and put two and two together."

While Sergio Pino acknowledged in a November 2023 deposition that Tatiana had "been sick for a long time," he flatly denied ever poisoning his wife. "I don't do those things," he said.

"And who do you think was poisoning my client when she was living at your house?" Rafool asked during the deposition.

"Nobody was poisoning Tatiana when she was living at my house," Sergio responded.

But Tatiana believed otherwise. She testified that her suspicions about her husband led her to file for divorce in April 2022. After her treatment at Johns Hopkins, Tatiana moved out of the home she shared with Sergio, on her doctors' recommendation. That was when her mysterious symptoms stopped entirely, she later said.

During the worst of her illness, though, Sergio never scaled back his hours at his company, Century Homebuilders Group, Tatiana said. She and her daughters wished he had worked less and devoted more time to Tatiana.

“It upset my daughters,” Tatiana said, “because they wanted him to — especially during COVID — wanted him to stay home at least in the mornings. ... Most of my critical time was early in the morning.”

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**JAY WEAVER**  
MIAMI HERALD

305-376-3446

Jay Weaver writes about federal crime at the crossroads of South Florida and Latin America. Since joining the Miami Herald in 1999, he’s covered the federal courts nonstop, from Elian Gonzalez’s custody battle to Alex Rodriguez’s steroid abuse. He was part of the Herald teams that won the 2001 and 2022 Pulitzer Prizes for breaking news on Elian’s seizure by federal agents and the collapse of a Surfside condo building killing 98 people. He and three Herald colleagues were 2019 Pulitzer Prize finalists for explanatory reporting on gold smuggling between South America and Miami.