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# Real Estate Mogul Facing Costly Divorce Allegedly Tried To Kill Wife Again And Again

Sergio Pino killed himself inside his Miami mansion just before the FBI planned to arrest him on suspicion of multiple plots to kill his wife of 30 years.

By **Drusilla Moorhouse**

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A Miami real estate titan, who authorities said had waged a five-year campaign to kill his estranged wife, was found dead last month as FBI agents who planned to arrest him in an early-morning raid entered his \$8 million waterfront mansion.

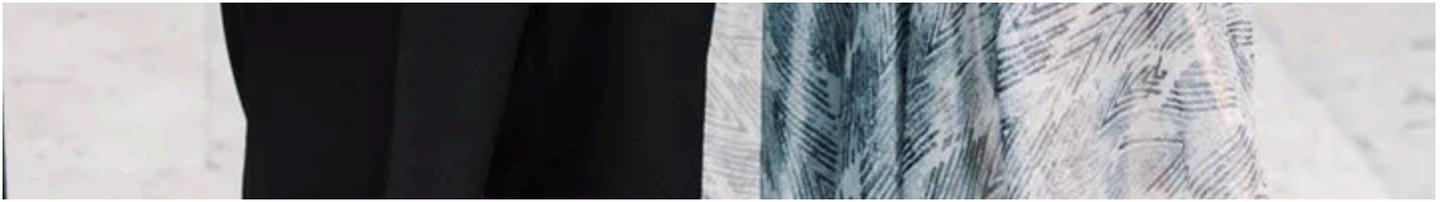
Attorneys for Sergio Pino, 67, claim federal law enforcement's aggressive, "unprecedented and unnecessary" response led him on July 16 to kill himself. They dispute that he conspired to kill his wife — even as a [911 call](#) released last week captured his adult daughter's horrified reaction to an alleged hitman at her mother's home.

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"There's a gun, there's a guy with a gun, please," Alessandra Pino pleads to a 911 dispatcher before saying she feared her mother might be shot.

Investigators said in court documents that they began investigating Sergio Pino in July 2022 for "multiple contracts" to kill his wife, Tatiana Pino, 55, dating back to 2019 and continuing through this June, an FBI agent said in an arrest warrant for one of his alleged co-conspirators. Their attacks included poisoning, arson, a hit-and-run and two gun-related attempts, authorities said in court documents. Alessandra Pino— who called 911 on June 23 after she said one suspect grabbed her and pointed a gun at her head — and Tatiana Pino's sister were also allegedly victims of the various schemes, which included at least one threatening letter and vandalism.





Sergio and Tatiana Pino were married for 30 years. ELAINE PALLADINO PHOTOGRAPHY

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The Pinos had been embroiled in contentious divorce proceedings since Tatiana Pino initially filed in April 2022 to end their 30-year marriage. In a deposition that September, according to divorce records reviewed by HuffPost, she said she believed her husband had been poisoning her with fentanyl for several years. The FBI later claimed that Sergio Pino had tampered with his wife’s prescribed medication, using the potent opioid he obtained from members of the first “crew” of four men he promised to pay if they killed his wife.

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In court documents, investigators said that Bayron Bennett — whom Tatiana Pino recognized as an employee who served the couple food and drinks on their [71-foot yacht](#) — told authorities in March that he had been asked by Sergio Pino (who is not named in the court documents) to assemble a crew of men to commit arsons and violently ram into Tatiana Pino’s car while she was returning home from what her divorce attorney, Raymon Rafool, [told NBC Miami](#) was “a very important divorce court hearing.”

After numerous hospitalizations for symptoms that included respiratory problems, she was admitted in 2022 to Baltimore's Johns Hopkins Hospital, where doctors detected the potent opiate fentanyl in her system, she said in a sworn statement. She said she had never used the drug before.

She was intubated six times during that hospital stay, she said. Before her release, her doctor urged her to stay at her sister's house.

"They were scared for me because had this happened to me again, I would have been dead," she testified, according to divorce records.

She fully recovered while staying with her sister and remained symptom-free, she said.

But she had not escaped danger. The attacks against her — and her loved ones — only escalated, becoming increasingly violent as authorities said her estranged husband took desperate measures to hold onto his wealth, influence and once-sterling reputation.

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Sergio Pino was found dead in an early-morning raid at his \$8 million waterfront mansion (pictured, center, with his yacht docked outside). [GOOGLE MAPS](#)

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## The Pinos' Marriage And Divorce Proceedings

Tatiana Pino, the mother of two of Sergio Pino's four children, filed for divorce in April 2022 after the alleged fentanyl poisoning was discovered. Sergio Pino had not yet been charged with a crime, and their bitter proceedings centered around Tatiana Pino's demand for a joint division of assets. She acknowledged that she was not entitled to alimony based on a postnuptial agreement she had signed in the weeks after they were wed in a civil ceremony. But she claimed that she had only agreed to sign it "under duress and coercion" after she said she was "ambushed" with the agreement the day before their public wedding celebration.

At the time, she was a 23-year-old college student earning \$20,000 a year, while Sergio Pino, then 35 and already married and divorced once, was worth \$15 million, the agreement said.

Their financial success was undeniable. In a 2021 financial statement, their combined net worth was listed as both \$359 million and \$153 million; Sergio Pino said in a November 2023 deposition that the larger number was “a joke.”

Tatiana Pino discovered in 2017 that her husband was having an affair with another woman, a Miami real estate broker, according to divorce records. The Pinos attended marriage counseling, but Tatiana Pino said her husband continued to see the other woman.

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Sergio Pino emigrated from Cuba with his family when he was 12 and, in 1995, founded [Century Home Builders](#). The company [touts itself](#) as the largest Hispanic homebuilder in the U.S., saying it has built more than 16,000 homes in South Florida. Sergio Pino was also well-known for his philanthropy and political sway, donating “tens of thousands of dollars” to Republican Party campaigns, including those of Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and former President George W. Bush, according to an [obituary published by the Miami Herald](#).

The Century Home Builders website held a [message from its founder](#) that is at odds with the accusations that he terrorized his wife and other family members.

“In today’s world, more than ever before, it’s important to consider the comfort, convenience and security a new home represents,” Pino wrote. “Few things in a lifetime will generate more precious memories than good times at home.”

## The First Crew Of Alleged Hitmen

Authorities arrested the first “crew” of four men who were allegedly tasked with killing Tatiana Pino in March on suspicion of stalking, arson and racketeering.

Authorities said that some members of the foursome — which comprised Bayron Bennett, Michael Dulfo, Jerren Howard and Edner Etienne — had supplied the fentanyl that Sergio Pino used to poison his wife. The group also committed two arson attacks at Tatiana Pino’s sister’s house — destroying several cars and some property, authorities said in court documents. The first fire occurred on July 2, 2022, and the second a year later, on Aug. 12, 2023. The damage was severe, but no one was harmed in those incidents.

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Just two weeks after the second fire, on Aug. 30, 2023, Tatiana Pino was the victim of a violent hit-and-run when a Home Depot truck that authorities said had been rented by the crew rammed into the passenger side of her car while she was pulling into her driveway following the important divorce court hearing. She was not seriously injured, and the truck sped away.

The four men were arrested and pleaded not guilty to the various arson, stalking and racketeering charges against them.



Sergio Pino, the president, CEO and founder of Century Homebuilders Group, at the company's Midtown Doral, Florida, residential complex sales center. PATRICK FARRELL/MIAMI HERALD/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE VIA GETTY IMAGES

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## The Second Alleged Crew

After the first crew members were arrested, authorities said they found evidence that Sergio Pino was involved in the attacks on his wife and raided his home for the first time, the [Miami Herald reported](#). With evidence that investigators were closing in, Sergio Pino hired a defense attorney and asked Fausto Rafael Villar, who did roofing work for him, to assemble a second crew to kill Tatiana Pino, officials said. The crew, including Villar, allegedly comprised five men: Avery Bivins, Clementa Johnson, Diori Barnard and Vernon Green.

Authorities said Sergio Pino offered to pay the men \$150,000 upfront and then another \$150,000 if they killed Tatiana Pino before June 24, the date of an upcoming court hearing.

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Just one day before the deadline, June 23, a man who FBI officials identified as Green was waiting outside Tatiana Pino's home for her to return from a Sunday church service. When she pulled up in her driveway, he got out of his truck and ran toward her, brandishing a gun, authorities alleged in court documents. In an attempt to get away, she drove her car into her backyard, slamming on her horn to alert others. Green, authorities said, ran to the front of the house where the Pinos' daughter was walking out, alarmed by the noise. He

allegedly pointed a pistol several inches away from her head, grabbed her arm, and told her to run inside, which she did.

The Pinos' daughter, not sure whether her mother was safe as the terrifying ordeal unfolded, called the police. Authorities [released a recording of that 911 call](#), her voice quiet and shaking as the dispatcher sought to obtain more details.

Tatiana Pino and her daughter were not physically harmed in the incident.

Green and the three other members of the second crew were arrested in early July on charges ranging from stalking to the use of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence. Barnard has pleaded not guilty to drug trafficking and possessing a firearm as a felon; the other men are scheduled to be arraigned on Aug. 2.

Sergio Pino was still alive when members of law enforcement, including a SWAT team, arrived at his house on the morning of July 16, FBI Miami Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey B. Veltri told reporters at a [news conference](#) later that day.

Sergio Pino's attorney, Sam Rabin, criticized law enforcement's use of force at his home that morning, "especially since we had offered to surrender him should that have become necessary," he said in a statement shared with HuffPost. "Today's events mark a very tragic ending to an investigation that we were confident we could successfully defend," he added. "There were many rumors and allegations but what was lacking was evidence."

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When asked about Rabin's comments during the July 16 news conference, U.S. attorney Markenzy Lapointe disputed that the attorney had offered to arrange Pino's surrender.

"The notion that whatever the lawyer may have said — and that's his right, is to defend his client — that somehow there was some notion, somehow he may have communicated that he was willing to surrender. No, that was not going to happen," Lapointe told reporters.

Lapointe emphasized there was "no question" that Sergio Pino posed a significant risk to his wife.

"We would never give them notice that we're going to come to arrest them," he said about similar cases where a person's life could be in jeopardy.

"We'd show up and arrest them, and we don't apologize for that, because there's all kinds of potential things that can happen. You give him notice — what was he going to do? We knew he was trying to kill his wife. What if you give him notice now? And he decided, 'You know what? I'm going to speed up the process now, since the two crews couldn't kill him. I'm going to kill her myself. I'm going to figure out a way and kill her myself.' That could have happened, right?"

Veltri said he stood by his decision to utilize a SWAT team and pointed out that giving Sergio Pino notice posed another risk.

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“If we were to give a subject an opportunity to self-surrender prior to the issuance of a search warrant, it’s not out of the realm of possibility — in fact, very likely — that they would destroy valuable evidence we need for subsequent prosecution,” Veltri said.

Villar, the alleged middleman, was arrested at his home on July 16, hours after Sergio Pino’s death, and faces charges of murder for hire and stalking, firearms offenses and obstruction of justice. He has yet to enter a formal plea.

While the investigation is ongoing, authorities believe Tatiana Pino is no longer in danger. “She is safe, and she no longer needs to live in fear for her life,” Veltri said.

Tatiana Pino’s attorney, Raymond Rafool, told HuffPost that she now owns the company that her husband founded.

“Currently, we are not commenting,” he said, “except to say that Tatiana and [her daughters] are doing fine and are successfully operating Century Homebuilders Group, LLC.”

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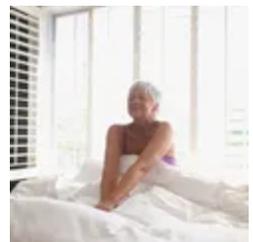
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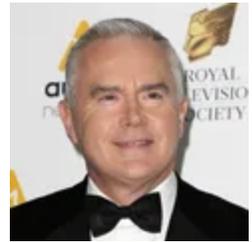
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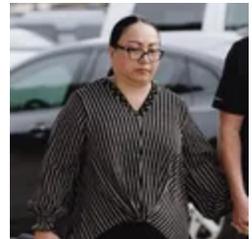
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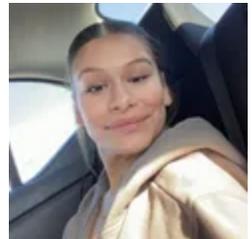
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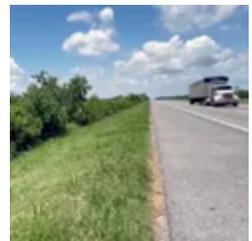
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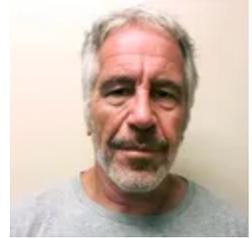


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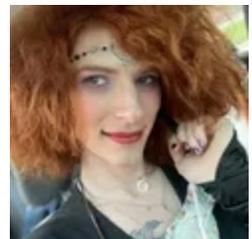
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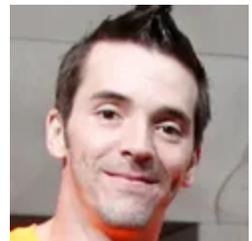
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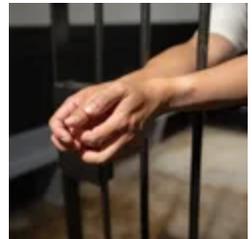
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