

Jerry Capeci

Gang Land News

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Last Week in Gang Land June 9, 2016

By Jerry Capeci

Meldish Murder Suspect Fingered In Shooting Of Bonanno Soldier



Things haven't progressed very smoothly for the feds since they moved to take

control of the Bronx District Attorney's investigation into the 2013 gangland-style slaying of longtime Luchese associate Michael Meldish, the former boss of a notorious team of drug dealers from the Bronx and East Harlem known as the Purple Gang.



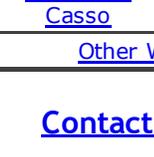
Michael Meldish GL

More than a year after federal prosecutors stepped into what looked like a sure-fire murder and racketeering case, the murder indictment against Luchese mobster [Christopher Londonio](#) and mob associate Terrence Caldwell languishes in Bronx Supreme Court. The duo is cooling their heels behind bars. And informed sources say there is little chance that the FBI and Manhattan U.S. Attorney's office will move to take over the prosecution in the foreseeable future.

This news comes as law enforcement officials tell Gang Land that Caldwell, the alleged gunman who [killed Meldish](#) with a single shot to the head as he sat in his car in front of his Throgs Neck home on November 15, 2013, is suspected in another mob rubout attempt.

The sources say Caldwell is believed to have been the gunman in the East Harlem shooting of reputed Bonanno soldier Enzo (The Baker) Stagno six months earlier.

Like Meldish, [Stagno, 50](#), was sitting in his car when he

<u>Joseph Massino</u>	<u>Steven "Stevie Wonder" Crea</u>
	
<u>John "Sonny" Franzese</u>	<u>Domenico "Italian Dom" Cefalu</u>
	
<u>Vincent "Chin" Gigante</u>	<u>Carmine "Junior" Persico</u>
	
<u>Anthony "Gaspipe" Casso</u>	<u>Liborio "Barney" Bellomo</u>
	
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Terrence Caldwell GL

was shot. At around 6PM on May 29, Stagno was at the wheel of his SUV while parked on the corner of 111th Street and First Avenue when a lone black gunman fired three shots, striking him once in the chest, according to the NYPD. The gunman fled on foot toward Second Avenue, said police officials who have released a still photo of the alleged shooter that was captured on a grainy surveillance videotape.

Stagno was not seriously injured and told cops he could not identify his assailant. Caldwell, 58, has not been charged, but law enforcement authorities say that detectives with the NYPD's Organized Crime Investigation Division have fingered Caldwell as the culprit, and that he is the focus of a continuing probe into that shooting.

His lawyer, Larry Sheehan, told Gang Land that the Bronx prosecutor handling the murder case, assistant district attorney Christine [Scaccia](#), informed him some time ago that Caldwell is a suspect in a Manhattan shooting. But the attorney has made no inquiries about the specifics, he said, noting that he's had a difficult-enough time getting info about his client's current indictment from Sciacca because of the stated interest by the feds.

Federal prosecutors stepped into the case in May 2015 when Londonio, 42, was arrested and detained on federal gun charges on a complaint by FBI agent Theodore Otto. Assistant U.S. attorney Scott Hartmann pushed Londonio's former lawyer from the case because he also represented Matthew [Madonna](#), a



NYPD photo of suspect in May 2013 shooting of Enzo Stagno

high-ranked mobster who was a target of the federal probe into the Meldish rubout.

Sources say Meldish, an enforcer and loanshark collector, earned Madonna's ire about eight months before he was killed for voicing his "disrespect" for the aging mobster, who at the time was serving as the "street boss" for acting Luchese boss Steven ([Stevie Wonder](#)) Crea.

Since obtaining the [indictment](#), the case has stalled. Scaccia, defense lawyers claim, has ignored requests for so-called "discovery information" that prosecutors are required to turn over to the defense following an indictment. In January, Scaccia told Bronx Judge Steven Barrett she expected the feds to take the case before the next scheduled session in April. But at that session, the case was put off again until June 21.

"I can understand that they want to withhold it (so as) not to jeopardize an investigation by the federal authorities," said Sheehan. "But at some time they have to shit or get off the pot — excuse my French — and I think the time has come."

"It has been more than a year," said the court-appointed attorney. "I think it's inappropriate for them to be holding someone for this long without turning over some discovery. Until I get some discovery, I can't even discuss with my client whether they have a good case or a bad case. He's telling me he's innocent; he doesn't know what's going on."

According to the lawyer, the DA's office doesn't have much evidence.



Enzo Stagno G L

Sheehan says there is no eyewitness evidence or any incriminating statements to police by his client (or Londonio either, sources say.) The DA's office stated in a news release last year that the duo was "tied to the crime by DNA, phone records, and license plate readers." Sheehan said the evidence is "very sketchy," and perhaps shows that "they were in the same area," or "traveling back and forth from Manhattan to the Bronx."

"They have cell phone evidence indicating that the two defendants were in contact with each other on the day of the incident," said Sheehan, stressing that the prosecution does not have "cell phone conversations" between the men that implicate them in the slaying that took place about 10 PM on November 15, 2013, a Friday night.

Sheehan said he didn't know whether the cell phone evidence came from "confiscated cell phones" or from one belonging to Meldish, or from another source. Meldish knew both defendants and cell phone records would undoubtedly show many calls among them, sources say. "I just know that the indictment was done with some cell phone evidence," said Sheehan.

"I'm kind of in the dark, and that's why I want to see some discovery, to try and figure out how they got him where they got him," said Sheehan.

That's pretty much how attorney Charles Carnesi feels about his client, who pleaded guilty last month to the gun charges that have had him behind bars for 13 months. Londonio, whose plea deal recommends a prison term between 12 and 18 months, is slated to be sentenced in August.



"We've been waiting many months for the feds to take the murder case," said Carnesi. "That doesn't seem to be happening. Now it's time for the Bronx prosecutors to step up and address the murder indictment that they filed more than a year ago."

Scaccia, Hartmann, Otto, and their respective law enforcement agencies, declined to comment.

Londonio's codefendant in the gun case, Bonanno soldier Pasquale (Paddy Boy) Maiorino, who was also arrested on the complaint by FBI agent Otto, is scheduled to be sentenced tomorrow by Judge Victor Marrero. His plea deal recommends a sentence of 33-to-41 months.

Judge Jabs Son Of Colombo Family Boss; Orders Special Sentencing Hearing



Mob scion Michael Persico is having a tough time with his new judge. To put it mildly.

The 59-year-old son of imprisoned Mafia boss Carmine ([Junior](#)) Persico is still awaiting sentencing on his long ago guilty plea to loansharking. The long-delayed sentencing has taken so long that Persico is now on his second judge. Brooklyn Federal Judge Dora Irizarry took over the case in January from Judge Sandra Townes.

But as Gang Land reported, things got off to a [rough start](#) when Persico showed up close to 11 AM for what Irizarry thought was supposed to be a 10AM court session. An irate Irizarry ordered a warrant for his arrest, but quickly yanked it when she realized the mistake was hers, not the defendant's. She blamed a cold-weather brain freeze for her error.

Persico's second appearance before Irizarry last week was at least as bad. Probably worse.

For starters, Irizarry had stated in January that she saw no need for a special sentencing hearing that former judge Townes had ordered after long, protracted [legal](#)

[arguments](#) over Persico's efforts to withdraw his guilty plea. Neither the government nor the defense wanted a so-called *Fatico Hearing*, and Irizarry said she didn't see a need for one, but held off making a final decision until she read the pre-sentencing materials.



But on Friday, even before she began questioning defense attorney Marc Fernich about what Persico had told the Probation Department, Irizarry let it be known that she had carefully read the Pre-Sentence-investigation Report. Among the problems she noted was that the PSR had not indicated that she was now the Chief Judge (Irizarry took over from Judge Carol Amon in April.)

More substantially, the judge said that the PSR showed that [Persico](#) had some large expenditures in the last few years, even though he had negative income during that same time frame. She also pointed out that Persico had yet to submit complete tax returns for all the years since he was indicted back in 2010.



"If he's not willing to be forthcoming, I assume he has something to hide," the judge told Fernich. "And how he managed to get these car loans with a negative gross income is beyond me," said Irizarry.

The Judge said she also needed all the financial info she could obtain in order to impose a fine that Persico could afford to pay. Persico faces a maximum of five years in prison for his conviction, but his signed plea agreement recommends a prison term of 37-to-46 months. He also faces a fine up to \$250,000.

Irizarry also suggested that by trying several times to take back his guilty plea, Persico wasn't really accepting responsibility for his crimes. She asked whether the current sentencing guidelines should be upped but backed off that notion when prosecutor Allon Lifshitz stated that the government stood by the terms of the plea deal it signed with Persico.

Irizarry expressed anger at Fernich when he argued that a special sentencing hearing that even the government wasn't seeking was unfair because it would include testimony that puts "my client in the worst possible light" and might sway the judge to impose a five year prison term instead of the one that both Persico and the government agreed would be appropriate.

A key crime which the government maintains it could prove against Persico, and which is mentioned in the PSR,

is his involvement in the last murder in the bloody Colombo family war, the 1993 slaying of rival capo [Joseph Scopo](#).

Again and again, as Persico's former lead counsel, Sarita Kedia "she stepped aside when her client moved to take back the guilty plea that she secured — sat in a back row of the courtroom taking notes on a lap top, the judge shot down every argument that Fernich tried to make in response to a query.



Joseph Scopo G L

At one point when Fernich was trying to address one of Irizarry's queries, the judge accused him of using "double speak" instead of giving direct answers. At another point, Irizarry threatened to fine him if he again mentioned his legal argument that because the PSR contained so many prior bad acts by Persico the government had "breached" its plea deal with Persico.

"The Chief Judge did not appear to be a happy camper" during the session, Fernich agreed, when Gang Land asked him about the proceeding.



Anthony Russo G L

Irizarry ordered Persico to furnish a complete set of "personal and business financial statements" to the Probation Department by July 1. She ordered probation officials to submit a revised PSR to the Chief Judge by July 29, and scheduled a *Fatico Hearing* for August 10.

Turncoat capo Anthony ([Big Anthony](#)) Russo, who has fingered Persico in the Scopo murder, will be the government's key witness at the hearing. Russo's testimony about the murder at the trial of longtime Persico pal Francis (BF) [Guerra](#), was disbelieved by jurors, who acquitted Guerra of the Scopo murder, but was credited by Judge Townes, who presided over the trial.

Last month, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Guerra's conviction for selling his prescription medications and the ultimate sentence of 11 years.

Luchese Wiseguy Learns That His Old Nemesis Is At It Again

There was an intriguing reunion in Brooklyn Supreme Court two weeks ago when Luchese soldier Eugene (Boopsie) Castelle and six underlings were busted on state racketeering charges. The gangsters were accused of operating a lucrative online gambling business that —

like virtually all mob bookmaking ventures these days — is linked to a wire room in Costa Rica.

Assistant district attorney Patricia McNeill was among those present for the arraignment. She didn't say a word, but there's no doubt that [Castelle](#), 56, spotted his old nemesis who cost him an 88-month federal prison stretch 16 years ago when he pleaded innocent to all charges in the 37-count enterprise corruption indictment.



Eugene Castelle G L

Turns out that ADA McNeill is now a deputy bureau chief and oversaw the online gambling investigation that snagged Boopsie, according to a news release from the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.



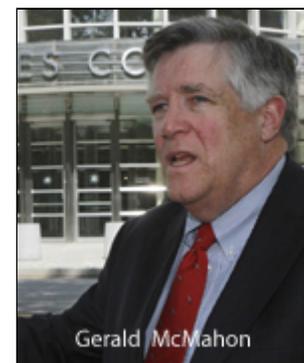
Patricia McNeill G L

In 2000, [Castelle](#) was an acting family underboss when he was hit with federal charges involving arson, extortion and drug dealing. That case was based on evidence that McNeill, then an up-and-coming mob-busting state prosecutor brought to then-U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch. Lynch swore McNeill in as a special federal prosecutor and she obtained an indictment of Boopsie, his brother John (Big John) [Castellucci](#), who is now a capo, and five others on racketeering charges.

Castelle, who was released from prison in 2008, is charged now with overseeing a gambling operation that handled \$13 million in bets from last September until March. Like his codefendants, he faces up to 25 years behind bars if convicted.

Before the case is over, there is likely to be another reunion of sorts in the Castelle case.

That's because since his arraignment, Boopsie has hired outspoken, in-your-face, defense attorney Gerald McMahon, who has a history with another supervisor in the Castelle indictment, Rackets Bureau Chief Christopher Blank, who was also in court for the arraignment.



Gerald McMahon

The two have had several legal duels. In 1999, in a relatively calm and laid back affair, McMahon's client, Ronald Carlucci, pleaded guilty and got 10 years behind bars for his involvement in a mob murder plot.

But in 2007, things got hot and heavy when McMahon and Blank paired off in the case of Genovese associate Carmelo (Carmine Pizza) Polito, whose federal murder conviction had been overturned. During a hard-fought trial, Polito was [acquitted](#) of state murder charges in the 1994 slaying of a mob loanshark in a [Williamsburg social club](#).



John Castellucci G L

The opposing lawyers had to be separated by court officers after McMahon accused Blank of suborning perjury of a key prosecution witness.

"Gerry, if you say that again I'm going to kick your ass," said Blank, poking a forefinger into McMahon's beefy chest as the lawyer walked right up to his face, according to an account in the Daily News by reporter Scott Shifrel.

"Chris, you know you're a lying snake," glowered McMahon, who is several inches taller and about 50 pounds heavier than the athletic-looking Blank, wrote Shifrel.

"When a jackass accuses me of suborning perjury, that's a compliment," Blank spit as McMahon slapped his finger away and pushed Blank with an open hand.

Blank declined to comment about any of his prior contacts with McMahon, or the Castelle case.

Not the usually quotable McMahon. "It's a fascist bullshit case," said the attorney, who served in the infantry during the Vietnam War. "It's nothing but a money grab and we're not going to stand for it, and let them get away with it."



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