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Toronto-area jeweller accused of laundering funds for Ryan Wedding

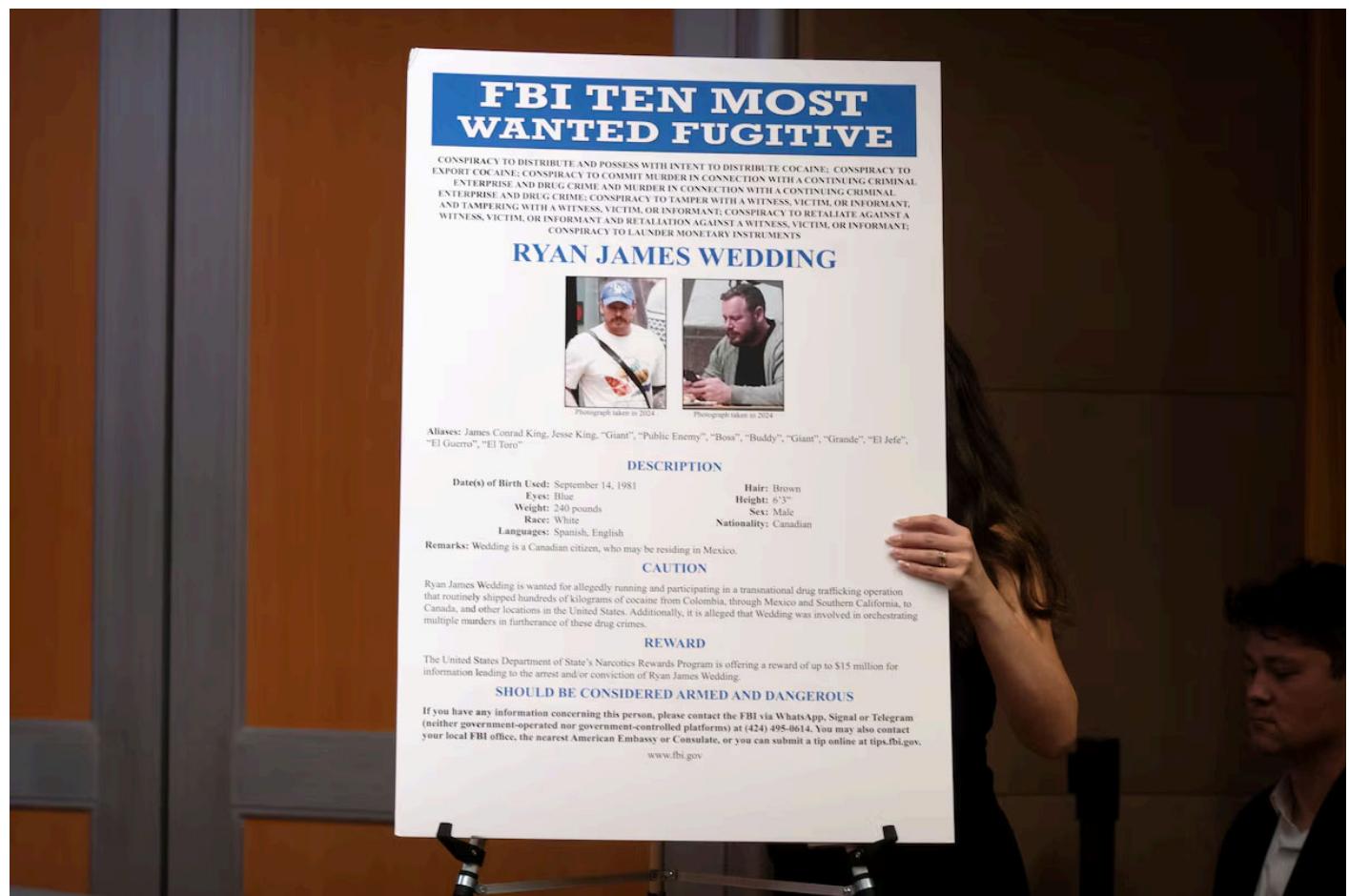
JILL MAHONEY >

TORONTO

PUBLISHED JANUARY 12, 2026

UPDATED JANUARY 13, 2026

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A wanted poster for Canadian fugitive Ryan James Wedding during a November, 2025, news conference in Washington.

MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Just before Rolan Sokolovski was arrested late last year, he bought a \$4-million house and flew to the Bahamas with his fiancée for a vacation that he told a Toronto court on Monday he never got to enjoy.

The Toronto-area jeweller has been in jail since November, facing extradition to the United States on charges of laundering money for a violent international drug-trafficking network allegedly run by former Canadian Olympic snowboarder Ryan Wedding.

Mr. Sokolovski, 37, testified on Monday during a hearing to determine whether he can be released on bail ahead of his extradition proceedings. He is pledging to post \$2-million in bail.

He is among eight people in Canada who were charged in November over alleged ties to Mr. Wedding, who the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation claims is the head of a multibillion-dollar drug-trafficking operation.

Mr. Sokolovski, who owns a jewellery business and is a former professional poker player, is accused of conspiracy to launder money as well as conspiracy to distribute and export cocaine. U.S. prosecutors claim he helped manage and launder millions of dollars in proceeds from Mr. Wedding's alleged criminal enterprise, including through the use of the stablecoin Tether and the cryptocurrency exchange KuCoin.



Rolan Sokolovski.
HO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Court heard on Monday that Mr. Sokolovski and his fiancée bought a home costing just over \$4-million in November. He said he made a down payment of \$1.7-million using savings, money from trading cryptocurrency, and about \$500,000 from his company's retained earnings.

Federal Crown attorney Milica Potrebic asked Mr. Sokolovski about a Bahamas vacation he and his fiancée planned for Nov. 9-16, 2025. He initially didn't appear to recall the trip, saying he has memory issues that have worsened from the stress caused by his arrest in mid-November.

Seized motorcycles believed to belong to Ryan Wedding valued at \$40-million, FBI says

Ms. Potrebic told court that Mr. Sokolovski landed in the Bahamas but was sent back to Canada by immigration authorities.

"I didn't get to enjoy a vacation," he said.

Ms. Potrebic questioned Mr. Sokolovski about his income sources, referring to details in several years of personal and business tax returns. "Your numbers just don't make sense," she said.

Prosecutors are opposing Mr. Sokolovski's release, arguing he should remain in custody to protect the public and that he poses a flight risk.

None of the allegations against Mr. Sokolovski have been proven in court.

Mr. Sokolovski, who was born in Lithuania and came to Canada as a young child, said he began investing in cryptocurrencies about seven years ago and has made several trades "where I got lucky," earning between US\$150,000 and US\$200,000 a transaction. He said he has also lost as much as US\$50,000 to US\$60,000 in a single trade.

Driver in alleged Ryan Wedding cocaine scheme took part under 'threat and fear,' judge found

He testified that he did not declare hundreds of thousands of dollars he made in cryptocurrency on his tax returns and was unaware of rules requiring him to

do so. "I thought it was the same as gambling," he said.

Mr. Sokolovski told court he has "significant assets" in his KuCoin account, but that the exchange froze the funds. (He filed a civil lawsuit last year to try to get the money back.)

He also said he played poker multiple times a week between 2013 and 2020 and earned in the "ballpark" of between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year.

Under questioning, Mr. Sokolovski said he didn't receive a salary from his company, Diamond Tsar, and reported negligible income on his personal tax forms, including zero dollars in several years.

Corporate tax documents referred to in court indicate that revenues for Diamond Tsar varied depending on the year, reaching roughly as much as \$37-million. However, the business reported relatively low profits, around 1 per cent in some years, court heard.

Also on Monday, Ontario Superior Court Justice Peter Bawden granted a request by Mr. Sokolovski's lawyer Scott Fenton for a publication ban on the identities of his client's proposed sureties, who would be responsible for supervising him if he is granted bail. Mr. Fenton argued that the sureties' safety is at risk, given the violence attributed to Mr. Wedding's drug-trafficking organization (DTO).

Ryan Wedding co-accused granted bail as U.S. extradition case proceeds

"It is reasonably possible that members of the Wedding DTO could view the applicant as a potential co-operating witness," Justice Bawden said in his ruling, adding that the evidence supports the inference that Mr. Sokolovski and those close to him "would be at risk of being killed, either by members of the Wedding DTO or hired assassins."

The U.S. is seeking the extradition of Mr. Sokolovski and his co-accused, including Toronto-area lawyer Deepak Paradkar. Prosecutors allege that Mr. Paradkar had "advised" that killing a police informant could prevent Mr.

Wedding and Andrew Clark, a Canadian who is the network's alleged second-in-command, from being extradited to the U.S.

Mr. Paradkar was granted bail last month. Mr. Clark was arrested in Mexico in 2024 and is in jail in California.

In addition, co-accused Rasheed Pascua Hossain was also granted bail by a B.C. court last month. The Calgary man allegedly also laundered money for Mr. Wedding's empire.

According to documents filed in Quebec Superior Court in November, U.S. authorities allege Mr. Sokolovski used his business to launder money for the Wedding organization and facilitated payments through “bulk cash, cryptocurrency, and wire transfers.”

In addition, investigators allege Mr. Sokolovski bought “jewelry, vehicles, and other high-end assets for Wedding and others,” the documents say.

Investigators say they have recovered a phone with hundreds of messages between Mr. Sokolovski and members of the Wedding organization, including Mr. Clark.

They also say Mr. Sokolovski paid an alleged Montreal hitman with a “bejewelled necklace” for his role in orchestrating the killing of a man in Colombia last year whom Mr. Wedding suspected of being a police informant.

U.S. and Canadian authorities believe Mr. Wedding is in hiding in Mexico despite a US\$15-million reward and a manhunt that has lasted more than a year.

The hearing continues on Tuesday.

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