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FBI seized phone with messages between jeweller, alleged Ryan Wedding drug ring, court documents show

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There is a “preponderance of evidence” against a Toronto-area jeweller accused by United States prosecutors of laundering millions of dollars for a violent international drug-trafficking network allegedly run by former Canadian Olympic snowboarder Ryan Wedding, an Ontario judge said on Tuesday.

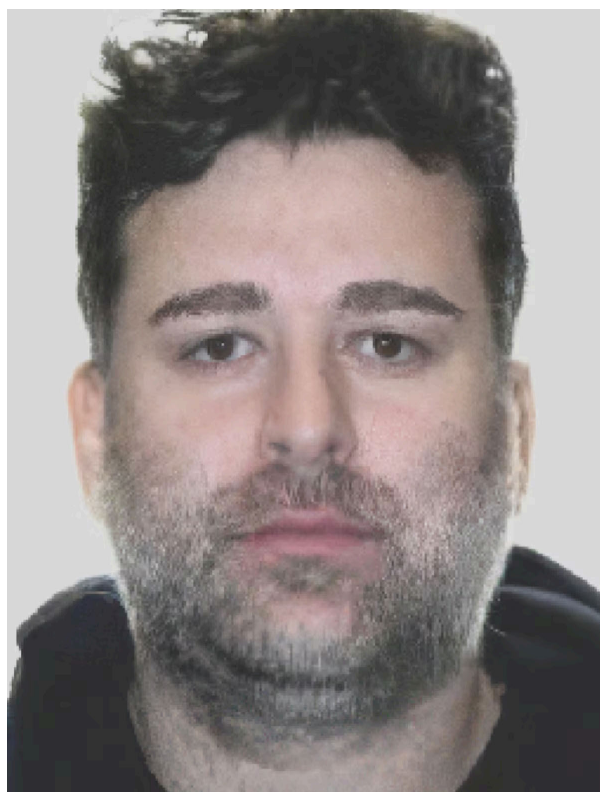
Ontario Superior Court Justice Peter Bawden was referring to information provided by U.S. officials against Rolan Sokolovski, who has been in jail since his arrest in November and faces extradition on charges of conspiracy to launder money and conspiracy to distribute and export cocaine.

“There is a preponderance of evidence that implicates Mr. Sokolovski, at least to the extent of communicating with the Wedding organization and

conducting transactions with the organization,” Justice Bawden said during Mr. Sokolovski’s bail hearing in Toronto.

According to documents filed in court in Canada, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation seized a phone with hundreds of messages between Mr. Sokolovski and other members of Mr. Wedding’s alleged multibillion-dollar drug ring on Threema, an encrypted messaging app. Some of the messages were about cryptocurrency and bank transfers, the documents say.

U.S. prosecutors allege Mr. Sokolovski used his business to launder millions of dollars in proceeds from Mr. Wedding’s alleged criminal organization and facilitated payments through “bulk cash, cryptocurrency, and wire transfers.” They also claim he bought “jewelry, vehicles, and other high-end assets for Wedding and others,” the court documents say.



Rolan Sokolovski.

HO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Justice Bawden commented on the evidence against Mr. Sokolovski in a back-and-forth discussion with his lawyer Michelle Psutka. Ms. Psutka had objected to a question the federal Crown prosecutor had asked one of Mr. Sokolovski’s proposed sureties.

Ms. Psutka said the allegations against Mr. Sokolovski were not the subject of the bail hearing and said her co-counsel, Scott Fenton, would later make arguments about the case against their client, adding that some of the U.S. information was “false.”

None of the allegations against Mr. Sokolovski, 37, have been proven in court.

Toronto-area jeweller accused of laundering funds for Ryan Wedding

Mr. Sokolovski, who owns a jewellery business and is a luxury goods broker, is attempting to secure his release from custody ahead of his extradition proceedings. He has pledged to post \$2-million in bail and proposed a plan to live with and be supervised by three sureties, with a fourth living nearby. The sureties have also said they will contribute funds toward Mr. Sokolovski's bail.

Two of the potential sureties testified in court on Tuesday and faced questions from federal prosecutor Milica Potrebic about their relationships with Mr. Sokolovski and their knowledge of his business.

The women said they did not know details of Mr. Sokolovski's finances and his sources of income.

The identities of the proposed sureties cannot be revealed because of a publication ban Justice Bawden imposed on Monday. The judge accepted Mr. Sokolovski's lawyers' arguments that the sureties' safety is at risk because of the alleged violence committed by Mr. Wedding's drug-trafficking organization.

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

In court on Monday, Mr. Sokolovski testified about his finances. He 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 his company's revenues 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.

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

Mr. Sokolovski testified he made hundreds of thousands of dollars trading cryptocurrency and playing poker over the years. He did not declare his cryptocurrency investments on his income tax returns, saying he was unaware of rules requiring him to do so.

Mr. Sokolovski is among eight people in Canada who were charged in November over alleged ties to Mr. Wedding and the drug-trafficking operation authorities say he runs.

In addition to the money-laundering allegations, U.S. investigators 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.

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.

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.

Mr. Sokolovski’s bail hearing continues on Wednesday.

Editor’s note: This article has been updated to correct a reference to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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