

Coppola's Bail Is \$200,000

Alleged Crime Figure Held On Extortion Charge Here

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Paul A. Coppola, a New Haven, Conn., man who allegedly has ties to organized crime, was arrested by the FBI here yesterday on extortion charges involving more than \$100,000 in financial transactions with a Washington businessman.

Only recently, the D.C. government, in a request for federal funds to fight organized crime, listed Coppola as one of six alleged "mobsters" operating in the Washington area.

The D.C. report also linked Coppola to alleged Cosa Nostra members Charles Rivezzo and the Carmine Lombardozzi. "Enormous sums" have been traced from these men to loan sharking operations here, the report said. It cited a 1971 federal grand jury as the source.

Coppola was arrested at a Holiday Inn at 2700 New York Ave. NE at 10:30 a.m. He was later brought before a U.S. magistrate and held in lieu of the extraordinarily high bond of \$200,000.

The government requested that all search warrants and affidavits in the case remain sealed. However, papers filed by the government in a request to set the bond contained a number of allegations regarding Coppola and his dealings with Bernard Semel, a Washington businessman who operates Eastern Import-Export, Inc., a fireworks business at 1441 Okie St. NE.

According to the papers, Coppola extended credit to Semel at illegally high rates of interest. The papers also allege that:

- Coppola attempted to ram his car into Semel's car on a Washington street in an effort to force him to come to New York City and to coerce payment of the loan.

In demanding money, Coppola threatened to blow up Semel's warehouse on Okie Street, to break both of Semel's legs and to take Semel's life.

Coppola has "close ties" to a number of organized crime figures in the New York area and a "working association" with publicly identified mob figures.

In a series of 1969 articles, columnist Jack Anderson alleged that Coppola had close business and personal ties to Rep. Robert Giaimo (D-Conn.).

These articles also described similar loans between Coppola and Semel in the early 1960s.

Coppola himself listed his occupation on a bail report as "real estate" and listed his annual income as \$25,000. He said on the bail report that he has lived at the same New Haven address for 23 years with a wife and daughter. He gave his age as 53.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Harold J. Sullivan, head of the major crimes unit, Coppola has been under investigation here since late 1969, when Coppola was in jail on income tax evasion charges. Sullivan said Coppola had been under extensive surveillance by the FBI.

- See COPPOLA, C8, Col. 1

Alleged Crime Figure Charged With Extortion

COPPOLA, From C1

Semel is reported to have been a friend and business associate of Coppola. In the articles in 1969, Anderson alleged

that Semel borrowed Mafia money from Coppola during the early 1960s for his fire-cracker operation.

Semel, 46, is best known as the inventor and distributor of the plastic cherry bomb. He was sentenced to a six-month jail term in 1965 after being convicted of shipping 5,760 cherry bombs from Maryland to Virginia.

In the 1969 articles, Anderson charged that Giaimo was a business partner with Coppola in a New London, Conn., apartment house operation.

Anderson also alleged that Giaimo by pressuring a draft board, kept one of Coppola's friends out of the Army for six months. Coppola and Giaimo used to meet at a New Haven restaurant and Giaimo's law firm handled a case charging Coppola with tax evasion in the early 1960s, according to Anderson.

Les Whitten, who works for Anderson, said yesterday that the allegations in those articles have never been disputed. Giaimo could not be reached for comment last night.

Anderson said in a Nov. 6, 1969, article: "Giaimo, while insisting he did nothing for Coppola in the criminal (tax) proceedings and has received nothing from him except possibly a few small campaign contributions, declared loyally: 'He's a good friend. He's a good guy.'"

At a hearing before U.S. Magistrate Lawrence Margolis yesterday, Coppola was represented by attorney Francis X. Grossi of the law firm of Williams, Connolly and Califano.

Dressed in a red cardigan sweater and dark sports shirt and wearing heavy black glasses, Coppola appeared tense at the hearing. He grimaced as Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald E. Campbell revealed he would ask for a bond of \$200,000, and grimaced again later when the magistrate agreed to set the bond at that figure.