

A Bodyguard of Colombo Prime Suspect in Slaying

NYTimes

By NICHOLAS GAGE

JUL 29 1971

Philip Rossillo, described by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a bodyguard of Joseph A. Colombo Sr., is a prime suspect in the killing of Jerome A. Johnson, the man the police said shot Colombo last June 28.

Rossillo, 28 years old, was one of three associates of Colombo searched yesterday by Federal Treasury agents who acted on reports from informants that the three men were carrying firearms. The agents said two guns had been found in the possession of one of the men, Paul Bevacqua, 32.

Later the police found a package in a car rented to Joseph A. Colombo Jr. that allegedly contained three loaded guns. A warrant will be sought for the arrest of Mr. Colombo

on gun charges, Federal agents said. He could not be reached for comment.

Sources close to the investigation of the shooting of Joseph Colombo Sr., who has been described as a Mafia leader, said the police and Federal agents were investigating the background of Rossillo and had been following his movements.

Although Rossillo has not yet been questioned by the police, the sources said, he is the prime suspect in their investigation of who killed Johnson after Johnson allegedly shot Colombo shortly before a rally of the Italian-American Civil Rights League in Columbus Circle. Rossillo, who lives at 2330 East First Street, Brooklyn,

Continued on Page 39, Column 5

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

could not be reached for comment.

An affidavit filed by an F.B.I. agent, Raymond Talia, in Federal Court in Brooklyn in support of requests for warrants to search Rossillo and others described Rossillo as "the bodyguard of Joseph Colombo Sr. and his immediate family."

Pistol in Satchel

"Philip Rossillo was photographed immediately prior to the shooting of Joseph Colombo Sr. carrying a black satchel," the affidavit said.

"Immediately after the shooting, a similar black satchel was found by the New York Police Department close to the point where Philip Rossillo was photographed. The New York Police Department found the black satchel to contain a fully loaded pistol."

Rossillo was described in the affidavit as being 5 feet, 10 inches tall and weighing 220 pounds. Recently, the affidavit

said, he has served as driver and bodyguard of Anthony Colombo, son of the wounded reputed Mafia leader.

Anthony Colombo is vice president of the Italian-American Civil Rights League, of which his father was one of the founders. Rossillo has frequently accompanied Anthony Colombo on visits to his father's bedside at Roosevelt Hospital.

Doctors at the hospital said yesterday that the condition of Joseph A. Colombo Sr. remained critical.

Warrants Issued

The affidavit filed by the F.B.I. was in support of requests for search warrants made by the Alcohol, Tax and Firearms division of the Treasury Department. Warrants were issued to search the persons and automobiles of Rossillo, Bevacqua, Vincent Santo Vingo and Peter Sabatino.

All four men have felony arms. They were all seen carrying law from possessing fire-convictions and are prohibited rying arms according to the affidavit.

About noon yesterday, Treasury agents drove to Roosevelt Hospital after receiving reports that Rossillo, Bevacqua and Santo Vingo were in the area.

Car Towed Away

As they arrived they noticed a package measuring about a cubic foot being transferred from Bevacqua's car to a black Buick leased to Joseph A. Colombo Jr., according to Joseph Lynch, acting director of the Federal Organized Crime Task Force in Brooklyn.

Bevacqua, who was described as a bodyguard of a Colombo family captain, Rocco Miraglia, then drove off, Mr. Lynch said, as the police moved in and towed the black Buick away for illegal parking. When the package in the car was examined later it was found to contain three guns, he said.

After the black Buick was towed away, the Treasury agents approached a parked maroon Cadillac and found Rossillo, Santo Vingo and Anthony Colombo in it. Santo Vingo was described in the F.B.I. affidavit as another bodyguard of Joseph A. Colombo Sr.

Sabatino, described as a bodyguard of Nicholas Bianco, a reputed Colombo family captain, was also in the area but fled, Federal agents said.

The Treasury agents used their search warrants to search Rossillo, Santo Vingo and the maroon Cadillac, Mr. Lynch said, and they found an empty holster and three boxes of .38-caliber ammunition in the car. None of the men in the car were immediately arrested, however.

Shortly afterward Bevacqua was stopped at Bath Avenue and 16th Street in Brooklyn and searched by Treasury agents. They found one gun on his person and one in the car, both of them loaded, Mr. Lynch said.

Gn Traced to Theft

One of the guns was later traced through its serial number by the F.B.I. and found to have come from a shipment stolen at Kennedy International Airport in 1969, Mr. Lynch said.

Bevacqua was later arraigned before United States Magistrate Max Schiffman on illegal pos-

session of a gun and possession of stolen goods. He was held on \$50,000 bail by Mr. Schiffman who referred to "the imminence of a full-scale gang war" in the city in setting the bail.

Bevacqua was convicted of robbery in 1964 and served 20 months in prison. He said he was a concrete worker.

Rossillo received a suspended sentence in 1962 for assault and robbery. He was arrested in Maryland in 1965 for possession of untaxed cigarettes, but the charge was dismissed.

Although he has not been picked up as yet he has been sought by the police for more than two weeks.

The police tried to pick him up on July 20 after being informed that he was in Roosevelt Hospital visiting Colombo. But as patrolmen entered one door, Rossillo exited from another, sources close to the investigation said.

Chief of Detectives Albert A. Seedman, who is in charge of the Colombo investigation, could not be reached for comment last night.

It was learned, however, that reports linking Rossillo to the shooting of Johnson have been made to Federal, state and local law enforcement officials by underworld informants close to Colombo family members.

Shortly after the shootings at Columbus Circle, the police theorized that Johnson might have been slain by a "hit man" as part of a plot to kill both Colombo and his attacker.

Later, the police said that Johnson might have been killed in a spontaneous reaction to the shooting of Colombo. They stressed that Johnson was not shot by a policeman.