

Colombo Bodyguard Said To Tie Gallos to Shooting

By NICHOLAS GAGE

A bodyguard of Joseph A. Colombo Sr. was quoted yesterday as having told Federal agents that the shooting of Colombo last June 28 was planned by "the Gallos."

The bodyguard was identified as Vincent Santo Vingo by Joseph Lynch, acting director of the Federal Organized Crime Strike Force in Brooklyn.

Santo Vingo's statement represents the first time it has become known that any of Colombo's followers have subscribed to the belief of the police that the shooting was an underworld plot. Colombo's sons have maintained that he was shot by a "fanatic."

Mr. Lynch said that when Treasury agents, accompanied by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, were searching Santo Vingo Wednesday in front of Roosevelt Hospital, he told one of the F.B.I. agents:

"I hope you're doing this to the Gallos, too, because they shot Joe Colombo."

Joseph and Albert Gallo are said to head a faction in the Mafia family reputedly led by Colombo. The Gallos are said to be at odds with the Colombo leadership.

Santo Vingo and another Colombo bodyguard, Philip Rossillo, were approached Wednesday by Federal agents while sitting in a car in front of the hospital with Anthony Colombo, son of the wounded alleged Mafia leader.

A third Colombo associate, Paul Bevacqua, was stopped in Brooklyn by agents who said he was carrying one loaded gun on his person and a second in his car. As a convicted felon he is prohibited by Federal statute from carrying firearms.

Bail Reduction Sought

It was at a hearing before United States Commissioner Max Schiffman in Federal Court on the reduction of Bevacqua's \$50,000 bail, set at his arraignment Wednesday, that Mr. Lynch disclosed Santo Vingo's remarks to the F.B.I. agent.

The bail was reduced to \$25,000 after the court was advised that Bevacqua's wife was five months pregnant.

Mr. Lynch also disclosed that information gathered as a result of the searches on Wednesday would be presented to Federal grand juries for appropriate action.

In the car containing Santo Vingo, Rossillo and Anthony Colombo was found an empty holster and three boxes of .38-caliber ammunition, the Federal agents said.

Later, the police found a package in a car rented to Joseph A. Colombo Jr. that allegedly contained three loaded guns.

One of the guns in the package and one of those in the possession of Bevacqua were traced by their serial numbers to a shipment of guns stolen at Kennedy International Airport in 1969.

Santo Vingo and Rossillo, both of whom have felony convictions, were not arrested Wednesday because no guns were found on them or in their car, Federal sources said.

However, Mr. Lynch's statement yesterday, that evidence on the searches would be presented to a Federal grand jury, indicated that action might be taken against Santo Vingo, Rossillo and Joseph A. Colombo Jr. later. Federal agents said Wednesday that a warrant for the arrest of Joseph A. Colombo Jr. would be issued but stated yesterday that no action would be taken until the grand jury completed its deliberations.

Rossillo is the prime suspect in the killing of Jerome A. Johnson, who the police have said shot Joseph A. Colombo Sr., according to sources close to the investigation.

Link to League Questioned

Thomas Nestro, spokesman for the Italian-American Civil Rights League, said he was not aware that Rossillo, Santo Vingo and Bevacqua had any connection with the league, of which the elder Colombo was one of the founders.

"They may be members—I'd have to check—but they don't play any important role," he said. Rossillo was said to be serving as a bodyguard and driver for Anthony Colombo, vice president of the league, in an F.B.I. affidavit filed Wednesday in Federal District Court in Brooklyn. Before that he served as a bodyguard of Joseph A. Colombo Sr., the affidavit said.

Mr. Nestro said he could not comment on the package of guns allegedly found in the car rented to Joseph A. Colombo Jr. "I don't know anything about it," he said.

He said there was no reason "anyone in the league" should feel the necessity to carry guns. Leaders of the league have said the shooting of Colombo was the work of a lone "fanatic" and not the result of an underworld plot as the police have assested.

Federal agents said that after Santo Vingo made the statement he made "some feeble efforts to take it back."

His statement, however, comes at a time of growing friction between the Gallo group and Colombo supporters. The Gallo group has been "completely successful" in displacing Colombo men from the waterfront in South Brooklyn, according to a Waterfront Commission investigator.