

Suspect in Silver Spring Slaying Is Charged With Murder

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Body

A suspect in the May slaying of a shopkeeper in Silver Spring is linked to the crime by DNA evidence found in a stolen getaway vehicle, authorities said yesterday, announcing that they had obtained a warrant charging the man with first-degree murder and carjacking.

Julio N. Paredes, 43, is in federal custody, accused of conspiring with others in a series of armed robberies across the state. The robberies began shortly before the slaying and continued until August. At least four of the six businesses that were struck catered to a Latino clientele, as did the variety store in Silver Spring.

Federal immigration authorities placed a detainer on Paredes, meaning that they suspect he could be in the country illegally and that they might move to deport him after his criminal cases run their course. Paredes's residency status was unclear.

Immigration agents questioned him after one of the robberies, said Lt. Dale Patrick of the sheriff's office in Queen Anne's County, where the last of the robberies occurred.

The issue of illegal immigration and crime has surfaced recently in Montgomery County, as the police department is seeking approval to begin asking suspects accused of violent crimes and weapons offenses about their immigration status.

Paredes's lawyer, William C. Brennan, declined to comment.

Police said yesterday that they were trying to confirm the identity of a second suspect in the slaying of Jorge Villatoro, an immigrant from El Salvador. Villatoro, 50, was fatally shot at the store Variedades Jenny, which was named for his daughter.

Villatoro was a friend to many Latino immigrants who shopped at the store. Customers used the store's wire transfer service to send money home. "There's no words to explain how devastating this has been to all of us," Jenny Villatoro said after her father was killed.

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After the shooting, the assailants carjacked a bucket truck and fled. The vehicle was found in Prince George's County. Montgomery detectives investigated the case for months without making any arrests.

On Aug. 7, authorities in Queen Anne's said, four men robbed a store called Tienda Ramirez, which also offered wire transfers. One of those **suspects** carried a shotgun. The group demanded proceeds from the store and fled after receiving cash, police said.

An off-duty sheriff's deputy soon spotted their sport-utility vehicle, the sheriff's office said. Inside they found Paredes and the other three men.

Investigators linked them to robberies in **Silver Spring**, Laurel and Annapolis, authorities said. Paredes was **charged** with conspiracy and using a firearm in a crime of violence. The other three were also **charged**.

The proposal by Montgomery police to check the immigration status of people arrested in connection with violent crimes or weapons violations would mark a departure from the county's past practice. Police said they hope to use immigration laws to get violent criminals off the street. Opponents said such a policy would all but necessitate racial or ethnic profiling, ensnaring innocent people.

In the case of Paredes, online court records do not indicate he was ever in police custody in Maryland before the **slaying** of Villatoro. It is not clear that any change in police procedures would have prevented the **slaying**.

Graphic

IMAGE; Julio Paredes is in federal custody.

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