



Warrant seeks unlicensed process server

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Las Vegas Justice of the Peace Joe Bonaventure signed a warrant Friday for the arrest of former police officer Maurice Carroll, an unlicensed process server, on 35 felony charges stemming from a scheme to submit false affidavits in court.

Bonaventure set bail at \$105,000, though Carroll had not been arrested as of late Friday.

Carroll, 41, who detectives said was fired from the Las Vegas police department in 2000 after roughly 10 years on the job, faces 17 counts of perjury, 17 counts of offering false instruments for filing or record and one count of obtaining money under false pretenses.

The alleged illegal conduct took place on two days, May 13 and June 13, according to a 12-page criminal complaint. Carroll's process serving company, On Scene Mediations, is alleged to have submitted false affidavits in the valley's justice courts, potentially disrupting the lives and finances of thousands of civil case defendants.

The company is alleged to have filed affidavits swearing that it served defendants with copies of lawsuits, but in many cases papers were not served, police said. That resulted in judgments of default against some defendants because they failed to respond to the lawsuits.

Most of the cases are in Las Vegas Justice Court; some also have been found in the North Las Vegas and Henderson justice courts, police said.

District Court officials are attempting to determine whether any of their civil cases have been affected.

The irregularities discovered so far in the justice courts have been traced to lawsuits brought by Richland Holdings, a debt collection agency, and Rapid Cash, a payday loan company. Both were clients of On Scene Mediations.

The criminal complaint against Carroll, who could not be reached for comment, focuses on civil cases in which 17 people were sued by Richland Holdings.

In each case, the defendant was hit with a default judgment, authorities said. In some cases, according to an affidavit filed by intelligence detective Nate Chio, defendants told police they were working when Carroll's employees claimed in affidavits to have found them at home.

Several of the defendants said they didn't live at the addresses where they were supposed to have been served.

Others said they were out of state when process servers claimed to have served them here.

Chio said in his affidavit that Carroll admitted during an interview to "falsifying all of the affidavits" in the 17 cases and attributed it to "bad judgment on his part."

Two of Carroll's employees, who could also face charges, told Chio that Carroll asked them to falsify affidavits of service.

Chio wrote that some of Carroll's process servers had claimed they were able to serve an "extraordinarily large" number of persons in one day.

Records showed that one Carroll employee, Visilia Coleman, served 38 affidavits of service, all notarized by Carroll, on June 19, 2008, Chio said.

"This is indicative of what has been called 'sewer service' and 'Superman syndrome' by the courts, where process servers falsely claim to have served affidavits when they have not," he added.

Officials said they don't know the extent of the problems On Scene Mediations has created for the courts, but police estimated thousands of cases could be affected.

Records show that Carroll's company, which was run out of his North Las Vegas home, was doing about \$50,000 in business a month, police said.

In his affidavit, Chio credited Las Vegas Justices of the Peace Melissa Saragosa and Diana Sullivan, who dealt primarily with civil cases, for uncovering the alleged scheme.

Chio said the judges noticed that cases involving the lawyers representing Richland Holdings and Rapid Cash "routinely went to default judgment."

"The plaintiffs were providing the court with an affidavit of service of the defendant, but the defendant was not present in court, and the plaintiffs were granted a default judgment in their favor," Chio wrote.

"In those instances that defendants would claim they were never served, the judges would set an evidentiary hearing. However, in each case the plaintiff's counsel would stipulate to setting aside the default judgment instead of having the process server come in and testify."

The attorneys for Richland Holdings and Rapid Cash have not responded to requests for comment.

Chio said that Carroll, who also goes by the alias Maurice Ausborne, was hired by the Las Vegas police department in September 1990 and was "terminated" in March 2000. The detective did not say why Carroll was terminated.

Business license records in North Las Vegas once listed Carroll as the owner of On Scene Mediations, but the license expired on Dec. 31, 2004, Chio said. Chio said the Nevada Private Investigators Licensing Board had cited Carroll on Dec. 23, 2003, for operating as a process server without a license.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported Thursday that the citation came with a \$2,500 fine and was approved

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by the agency's five-member board in March 2004. Carroll did not show up on the agency's radar until May, when Saragosa and Sullivan asked it to investigate On Scene Mediations.

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