Trayvon Martin's killer back in jail

By GEORGE E. CURRY

Editor-in-Chief

NNPA News Service

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – After having his bond revoked by a judge who wonders whether he was deliberately misled by George Zimmerman and his wife, the admitted killer of unarmed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin remains confined to his cell in the Polk County Correctional Facility in Sanford, Fla. this week facing serious credibility issues that could impact the outcome of his

future trial.

Acting on a motion by state prosecutors, Seminole County Circuit Judge Kenneth Lester revoked Zimmerman's $150,000 bond on Friday and ordered that he returned to police custody within 48 hours. Zimmerman has been charged with second-degree murder in connection with the death of Martin, who was returning from a nearby Seven-11 store with a can of Arizona tea and a bag of Skittles on Feb. 26 when he was shot fatally by Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch captain.

By prearrangement, Zimmerman, who had been living in an undisclosed location since posting bond on April 23, met personnel from the Seminole County Sheriff's office in a parking lot off a nearby interstate highway where he was handcuffed and transferred to an unmarked white police van.

At 1:43 p.m. on Sunday, approximately 45 minutes before the court-imposed deadline, Zimmerman was led out of the van and escorted inside the correctional facility where he was booked and placed in a private cell. Wearing a checkered button-down shirt and jeans, Zimmerman did not answer questions shouted to him by waiting reporters.

Mark O'Mara, the attorney for Zimmerman, filed a motion for a new bond hearing on Monday, which Judge Lester is expected to grant.

The motion to revoke Zimmerman's bond, filed by Assistant State Attorney Bernardo de la Rionda, stated, "On 4/20/2012, this Court conducted a Bond Hearing in which the Defendant was present and several of Defendant's family members testified via telephone under oath. At the Bond Hearing Defendant misrepresented, misled and deceived the Court as to his possession of a United States passport, and Defendant and his family's financial circumstances."

At that same nationally-televised hearing, the motion declared, "Defendant's family members misinformed the Court (the State would use a much stronger and accurate word to describe what occurred – Defendant's wife lied to the Court) about Defendant and his family's finances."

The prosecutors provided financial records and transcripts of taped telephone conversations between Zimmerman and his wife, Shelly. At Zimmerman's bond hearing, there was this exchange between Prosecutor de la Rionda and Shelly Zimmerman:

Q: You mentioned also, in terms of the ability of your husband to make a bond amount, that you had no money, is that correct?

A: To my knowledge, that's correct.

Q: Were you aware of the website that Mr. Zimmerman or somebody on his behalf created?

A: I'm aware of that website.

Q: How much money is in that website right now? How much money as a result of that website was –

A: Currently, I do not know.

Q: Do you have an estimate as to how much money has already been obtained or collected?

A: I do not.

However, transcripts of telephone calls between Zimmerman and his wife – calls that they knew were being recorded – showed that they discussed money in the account on April 12, 15 and 16, well before the April 20 bond hearing at which they were trying to show that Zimmerman was indigent and could not afford a high bond.

“During some of the calls to his wife, Shelly Zimmerman, Defendant discussed the amount of money sent to PayPal through the website, which was deposited into Defendant’s Credit Union account, and at defendant’s direction transferred into his wife’s Credit Union account,” the motion to revoke Zimmerman’s bond recounted.

It also noted, “The Credit Union statements show on 4/19/2012, the day before the Bond Hearing, Defendant and his wife had access to over $135,000.00. Defendant has intentionally deceived the Court with the assistance of his wife, Shelly Zimmerman. During the jail phone calls both of them spoke in code to hide what they were doing. And, Defendant fully controlled and participated in the transfer of money from the PayPal accounts to Defendant and his wife’s Credit Union accounts. This occurred prior to the time Defendant was arguing to the Court that he was indigent and his wife had no money.”

Part of those funds from the website, it was later learned, was used to post Zimmerman’s bond.

The motion to revoke Zimmerman’s bond also disclosed that contrary to representation of Zimmerman’s lawyer, he had a second passport that he could have used to flee the United States.

“At the beginning of the Bond Hearing on 4/20/2012, Defense Counsel informed the Court that Defendant was surrendering his United States passport and tendered it to the Court, noting that the passport ‘expired in May 2012.’ Defense counsel stated ‘this is my client’s current passport and only passport that he has,’” the prosecution motion stated.

However, Zimmerman had a second passport that he did not disclose, which was valid until 2014. Zimmerman’s lawyer claims that his client thought he had lost his original passport and had applied for a replacement. Zimmerman supposedly found the original passport after he had

received the second one.

A transcript of a telephone call between Zimmerman and his wife on April 17 could prove problematic for the defense. Approximately seven minutes into the conversation was this exchange:

George Zimmerman: Do you know what? I think my passport is in that bag.

Shelly Zimmerman: I have one for you in safety deposit box…

George Zimmerman: Ok, you hold onto that.

The issue of Zimmerman's credibility is crucial not only as to whether he will be allowed out again on bond, but to future trial proceedings as well. His creditability is key because Zimmerman claims he was acting in self-defense when he killed Trayvon Martin on February 26. Because there were no eyewitnesses and Martin is not alive to present his side of the story, a verdict could rest largely on Zimmerman's believability.

If prosecutors can use information that shows Zimmerman deceived the court, it would help buttress their case against him. However, Zimmerman's attorneys are likely to have that information excluded on relevancy grounds.

In the meantime, Judge Kenneth Lester will have to rule on the state's motion to revoke Zimmerman's bond. The motion states, "In setting Defendant's Bond at $150,000 the Court

relied on false representations and statements by Defendant and Shelly Zimmerman. The Court should revoke Defendant's Bond or at a minimum increase it substantially."