

Beat: News

Gambino Crime Family Associate Convicted by Federal Jury

Shot His Longtime Friend

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USPA NEWS - Anthony Pandrella, an associate of the Gambino organized crime family, was convicted today by a federal jury in Brooklyn of all three counts in an indictment charging him with the Hobbs Act robbery and murder of 77-year-old Vincent Zito and unlawful use of a firearm.

The verdict followed a one and a half-week trial before United States Chief District Judge Margo K. Brodie. When sentenced, Pandrella faces up to life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), and Keechant Sewell, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced the verdict.

"Today's verdict has found that the defendant is a cold-blooded killer who shot his elderly friend in his home, execution-style with a bullet in the back of the head, to avoid returning a large sum of money he was holding for the victim," stated United States Attorney Peace. "In addition to the brutal betrayal, the defendant also robbed luxury watches from the victim's loan business. I commend the FBI special agents and the NYPD detectives who solved the case and brought Pandrella to justice."

Mr. Peace also expressed his thanks to the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office for their assistance on the case.

"Today's conviction underscores that no one – including associates of organized crime – is above the law," stated Commissioner Sewell. "Because of the outstanding work of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District and our law enforcement partners at the FBI, this defendant's callous disregard for human life will not go unanswered. I thank and commend everyone who worked on this case and helped us hold this violent criminal accountable for his actions."

The evidence at trial proved that Zito was running an illegal loansharking business and had been told by Pandrella that he was "hot," meaning that he was under investigation by law enforcement. Zito had given Pandrella \$750,000 from the business to hold for safekeeping, but when he tried to collect the money back from Pandrella, the defendant failed to return it. On the morning of October 26, 2018, Pandrella went to the Sheepshead Bay home of Zito and while there, shot his friend of more than 30 years in the back of the head at close range. Pandrella also stole expensive foreign-made wristwatches that the victim was holding as collateral for a customer's loan. Pandrella was captured on security camera footage entering and leaving Zito's residence at the time of the murder and robbery. After leaving the victim's residence, Pandrella went home and additional security video from his neighborhood showed that the defendant changed his shoes and clothing, and removed the driver's side floor mat of this vehicle so it could be cleaned. Zito's body was discovered by his 11-year-old grandson upon returning home from school.

The murder weapon was recovered at the scene and Pandrella's DNA was found on the trigger and grip of the firearm.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Organized Crime & Gangs Section. Assistant United States Attorneys M. Kristin Mace and Matthew R. Galeotti are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

ANTHONY PANDRELLA

Age: 62

Brooklyn New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 19-CR-122 (MKB)

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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