

# Police: Tacoma man confesses

Suspect charged in Ester killing; authorities say drug case spans three states, three murders

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A Tacoma, Wash., man has been charged with killing a Fairbanks woman in an Ester apartment Friday morning, then setting the apartment on fire to burn the evidence of the murder, Alaska State Troopers said Wednesday.

Jason T. Wallace, 22, admitted Tuesday he beat Teacka Bocate, 25, in the head with a hammer, then used gasoline in setting the apartment alight, trooper Sgt. Scott Grasle said.

"We have a lot of circumstantial evidence, had obtained quite a bit



WALLACE

*"Mr. Martin was acting very nervous and scared and made the comment to (the girlfriend) that he felt he would be killed on this trip."*

— Washington court documents describe a trek to California allegedly connected to the shootings of 27-year-old Lamar Martin of Olympia and Hakeem Shalim Bryant, 25, of Fairbanks



HOLMES

of physical evidence and based on statements he made provided enough evidence to file the charges of homicide and arson," Grasle said Wednesday.

The murder filing is the first such charge in a three-state case of

drug money, arson and murder that has left three people dead. The bodies of two people, including Hakeem Shalim Bryant, 25, of Fairbanks, were found Christmas Eve along Interstate 5 in Northern California.

Wallace, who also faces an arson charge, is the second person to be arrested in the burgeoning case. Fairbanks resident William Z. Holmes, 22, was charged in a Washington state court on Monday with arson for the burning of a

car believed used in the Northern California killings.

Documents filed in the Washington state case against Holmes offered the first details of the investigation. While Fairbanks court papers add further information, neither filing tells why the killings occurred.

"We can't talk about a motive," Grasle said.

The Fairbanks court complaint states Bocate, who was Bryant's girlfriend, suffered injuries that were caused by a hammer and that she was killed before the fire.

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# CHARGES: Holmes arrested in Tacoma

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Wallace, who was already in custody at Fairbanks Correctional Center on a felony assault charge for stabbing a man, took troopers to the area on the Parks Highway where he had thrown the hammer, Grasle said. Volunteers helped troopers find the tool.

Wallace had been arrested five days earlier at the Fairbanks International Airport while he waited for a flight to Washington state. Grasle said Wallace had rescheduled his flight to return to Washington earlier than planned and was caught wearing a hat that was singed on the front. Wallace also had burns on one hand and on his face.

Wallace had been living in the Fairbanks area for the past three weeks, spending time between the Ester apartment and another one on Clarkson Street, Grasle said.

Grasle said it was at the Clarkson Street apartment where Wallace stabbed Corey Spears, 28, who is also Bryant's brother and whose name is listed on the apartment rental papers along with the name of another man.

Troopers learned of the attack when Spears arrived at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital suffering a non-life-threatening stab wound to the neck at 7 a.m. Friday—an hour before the fire at the Ester apartment was discovered. Spears told troopers Wallace had stabbed him.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the California killings continues.

Motorists, including an off-

duty police officer, found the bodies of Bryant, 25, and Christopher Lamar Martin, 27, of Olympia, Wash., a half a mile apart just off I-5 near the town of Castella, about 30 miles north of Redding. Both had been shot in the head.

Bryant was a former student at West Valley and Lathrop high schools. The former West Valley quarterback had been living with Bocate at the Ester apartment, Grasle said.

Washington court documents in the arson case against Holmes reveal a few details about the crimes:

Martin's girlfriend in Olympia told investigators that she believed Martin, Bryant and Holmes were going to California Dec. 24 to make a "big transaction" that she said involved the purchase of drugs. Another woman told investigators that \$80,000 was taken along for a "big score."

"Mr. Martin was acting very nervous and scared and made the comment to (the girlfriend) that he felt he would be killed on this trip," the document states, recounting what investigators were told. The girlfriend said the three men left her house at about 1 p.m. Christmas Eve in the rental car that Holmes is accused of later setting on fire. She didn't hear of her boyfriend again until she saw the homicide case reported on television.

The next day, a Centralia, Wash., police officer was called to a vehicle fire at 7:44 a.m. The car, a 2002 Mercury Marquis, matched the description of one that California authorities said

may have been involved in the highway killings. Inside the trunk he found a suitcase with burned clothing and a souvenir from Alaska.

Another woman, Wallace's wife, told investigators that Holmes called her early Christmas morning to ask her to drive to Centralia to pick him up and take him to Wallace's apartment in Tacoma. There he made several phone calls.

Alaska State Troopers, investigating the Ester death, joined the inquiry in Washington and on Sunday traveled south to aid in a search of Wallace's apartment and in the arrest of Holmes in Tacoma.

The Washington documents also mention an earlier encounter between authorities and some of those whose names would later surface.

Troopers, the document says, learned that Spears, Holmes and another man were together in a car troopers stopped on the Parks Highway Dec. 21. Holmes was arrested—the document doesn't say on what charge—but posted bail and with Bryant flew to Washington that day. Holmes had two guns checked in his baggage, Spears told investigators.

Authorities in Alaska, California and Washington have said little publicly about the case.

Holmes is being held in the Lewis County Jail on \$1 million bail; Wallace is being held in Fairbanks on \$2 million bail.

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