

# Conspiracy Charges Dropped

By Lisa Stephens

At a press conference Monday, Dale County and Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams announced that state charges against Fred and Garrett Daniels and Andrew Garner have been dismissed.

The three were arrested in

February for their alleged involvement in a plot to kill Circuit Judge Ken Quartebaum, Ozark attorney Buddy Williams and a private citizen, and assault another individual. The dismissal came after a Friday (April 11) meeting between Adams and FBI agents, who presented all evidence and thoroughly discussed

the case with the district attorney. After a weekend-long review and consultation with other district attorneys, Adams made the decision that there is "no credible corroborating evidence."

"There's just no question what had to be done," Adams said. The dismissal on all three was granted

by Dale County Circuit Judge Ben McLaughlin.

Originally, Fred and Garrett Daniels hired Garner to do surveillance related to the family's civil cases, but in September when Garner allegedly solicited a Hartford resident to find a hit man,

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the man informed the Hartford Police Department. An undercover police officer from Barbour County then posed as a hit man and recorded the verbal agreement of the plot. Between two meetings held on Nov. 3, the officer received \$1,000 in transferred funds that Garner said was from Garrett Daniels, but the specific purpose of the money was unclear. The money was seized by the Hartford Police Department.

At the time of the arrests, only one of the two recorded meetings from that night was available to the district attorney and Dale County Sheriff's Office. The other tape was first available to FBI agents last week and they shared the evidence with Adams on Friday. It contained a video of a conversation between Garner, the Hartford resident who originally alerted the Hartford Police Department of the situation and the undercover officer posing as a hit man.

"The word 'murder' is never mentioned on the entire tape," Adams said. There was also no mention of Quattlebaum or one of the private citizens who allegedly had been plotted against, Adams said. The Daniels did file a complaint with the FBI against Quattlebaum, who ruled on two of the family's divorce cases.

The video confirms that Garner was looking for someone to hurt Buddy Williams and a private citizen by breaking the arm of each. For this reason, Adams said Garner will be arrested for second degree conspiracy to assault, but Adams is still determining in which county Garner needs to be charged. Previously, he

was charged with one count of conspiracy to murder.

Adams said that statements made on the video contradict written statements given after Jan. 30 when the information came out during a divorce hearing involving the Daniels family. Quattlebaum, who was presiding over the case, alerted Adams that night. "I was very upset to have a potential target of this case call me and tell me," Adams said. This was also the first time the Dale County Sheriff's Office learned of the case.

During the Jan. 30 civil hearing, Hartford Police Chief Nick Finer testified about a murder for hire of three individuals and the conspiracy to assault. On Jan. 31, the Hartford Police Department interviewed the man who originally alerted the department of the situation and who was a witness during the recorded conversations. He confirmed the murder and assault conspiracies implicating the Daniels.

The Dale County Sheriff's Office, along with FBI agents, spoke with Garner on Feb. 6, who also asserted the Daniels had conspired to murder and assault.

Fred Daniels, age 66, and his 39-year-old son, Garrett Wayne Daniels, both Pinckard

residents, were arrested Feb. 7 and charged with three counts of conspiracy to murder and one count of conspiracy to commit assault.

Dothan resident Andrew Garner, age 34, was arrested Feb. 6 and charged with one count of conspiracy to murder.

In the past few days, all three have been released, Garrett Daniels and Garner after the motion to dismiss and Fred Daniels last week on a cash bond.

Adams said, "I truly believe at the time of the arrests, probable cause existed." The district attorney said he made the motion to dismiss because putting the case before a grand jury under the circumstances would be a "chicken way to do it."

From the point of the arrests, the FBI became the primary investigator in the cases. Adams praised the work of the FBI, but as to how he felt about not learning of the case until months after the Hartford Police Department first heard of it, he said, "I wish it would have been handled differently from the start."

Although these cases have been dismissed at the state level, Adams said that he can't speak as to where the cases stand with the FBI.