

NEWS

Crown wants Roberto Scoppa, brother of Montreal Mafia leaders, detained despite ankle bracelet offer

By Paul Cherry, Montreal Gazette

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Some of the items are shown that were seized in a January 2024 investigation in the U.S., where Roberto Scoppa, the brother of deceased Montreal Mafia members Andrea (Andrew) and Salvatore Scoppa, is indicted on charges involving a conspiracy to smuggle drugs from Mexico to the U.S. and Canada. *Photo: U.S. Department of Justice*

Lawyers representing Roberto Scoppa, the brother of two deceased members of the Montreal Mafia, have been asked to produce more evidence of how a GPS locating device would work if their client is to be released while he fights an extradition request from the U.S., where he faces drug-smuggling charges.

On Tuesday, during a bail hearing at the Montreal courthouse, Superior Court Justice Marc-André Blanchard asked Jeffrey Boro and another lawyer representing Scoppa if they could have a representative from a company that makes the device testify on Thursday about how it works.

While making arguments in support of Scoppa's release, Boro offered the bracelet as a solution for authorities to monitor his client if Blanchard ultimately grants him bail.

Erin Morgan, the lawyer representing Canada's justice minister in the extradition request, argued against Scoppa being released and said she wanted more information on the ankle bracelet. She noted there have been well-documented cases in which people have been able to remove the bracelets with ease.

Blanchard agreed to resume the hearing on Thursday.

Scoppa, 55, is the brother of Andrea (Andrew) and Salvatore Scoppa, two influential leaders among the Montreal Mafia who were killed on different dates in 2019. According to evidence heard in recent murder trials held in Montreal, both brothers were protagonists in a conflict between Calabrian and Sicilian clans within the Montreal Mafia. An informant who testified in those murder trials alleged that both Andrea and Salvatore ordered the deaths of several important people in the Rizzuto organization during 2016.

On Tuesday, Boro argued that while Roberto Scoppa's siblings might have been part of the Montreal Mafia, that does not mean his client is as well.

Morgan added that the U.S. government's request to deny bail is not based on an allegation that Scoppa is part of the Montreal Mafia.

Scoppa was arrested in late January as part of Operation Dead Hand.

According to a statement issued in January by the U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California, 19 people in all have been charged in the U.S. "for their alleged roles in the organized crime syndicate, including Mexico-based suppliers who brought large quantities of narcotics into the United States, United States distributors, a Canadian who led an exportation organization, Canadian-based semi-truck drivers who operate in the United States, and a large-scale Canadian trafficker and Italian organized crime figure, Robert Scoppa, whom investigators allege was purchasing massive quantities of drugs on a wholesale basis."

U.S. authorities allege the group used "handlers (who) co-ordinated the pickup and delivery of large shipments of cocaine and methamphetamine, which were loaded onto long-haul semi-trucks destined for Canada."

"The transportation was co-ordinated by a network of drivers working with dozens of trucking companies who made numerous border crossings from the United States to Canada via the Detroit Windsor Tunnel, the Buffalo Peace Bridge and the Blue Water Bridge."

While making her arguments against Scoppa's release, Morgan noted that when Operation Dead Hand was underway, Scoppa had dinner with a person who was working as an undercover agent in the investigation.

After some drugs had been seized, "Scoppa told the confidential witness that they need to make sure it doesn't happen again," Morgan said. "(Scoppa also said) that they should do smaller loads of only 100 kilograms (of cocaine) a month to escape notice and that Scoppa makes \$1 million a year using that method. This is an indication that he is someone of authority or of some planning, that he does this regularly.

"They also discussed money laundering through cryptocurrency."

Morgan also said there is evidence that, during the investigation, Scoppa stayed at the same hotel in Colombia as Martin Robert, one of the most influential members of

the Hells Angels in Quebec. Scoppa testified during his bail hearing and conceded he stayed at the hotel at the same time as the Hells Angel, but denied having met with Robert.

pcherry@postmedia.com

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