



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWO PIMA COUNTY DEPUTY ATTORNEYS WIN PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD

*Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green
Receive National Award for Outstanding Prosecution*

TUCSON, ARIZONA – Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall announced that Deputy County Attorneys Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green, the veteran team of prosecutors who brought fugitive socialite Pamela Phillips to justice, were honored on Sunday, July 20th in Denver, Colorado at the National District Attorney's Association annual board meeting with the prestigious Home Run Hitters Award for outstanding prosecution.

The National District Attorney's Association (NDAA) is the oldest and largest national professional organization representing criminal prosecutors, and serves as a nationwide resource center for training, research, and technical assistance, reflecting the highest standards and cutting-edge practices of the prosecution profession.

NDAA annually inducts a select few prosecutors into the Home Run Hitters Club to recognize their outstanding work in trying complicated and difficult high profile cases. The "Homerun Hitters" award is the highest national award given in recognition of exceptional prosecution to honor those prosecutors who step up to the plate and score a "homerun hit" for their office. In addition to being recognized by their peers as the best in the nation, the winners received a genuine Louisville Slugger baseball bat inscribed with their names.

Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall nominated Unklesbay and Green, citing their unrelenting dedication, focus, and commitment to justice in the Triano case. "I am very proud of Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green. Their performance was truly exceptional and their dedication and commitment to public safety is unquestionable," LaWall stated.

Unklesbay has dedicated his entire career to public service and is recognized as one of the nation's best trial attorneys. In 2003 he received a Lifetime-Achievement Award from the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council and was honored in 2004

with their Arizona Felony Prosecutor of the Year. In June 2005, the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation recognized him for Outstanding Advocacy in Capital Cases. And in 2009, he was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers.

Green joined the County Attorney's office in 2001 and has spent much of her career as a tireless advocate for victims of domestic violence, earning her the David R. White Excellence in Victim Advocacy Award in 2008 from Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Attorneys' Advisory Council. In 2010, Green was honored by the YWCA with the Woman on the Move award. Last year, the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council recognized with the distinguished Felony Prosecutor of the Year award.

"Unklesbay and Green are not only exemplary trial attorneys, but raise the standard for all prosecutors nationwide." LaWall added.

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The full nomination and photos from the event are attached below.

Nomination of Pima County Deputy County Attorneys Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green for NDAA's 2014 Homerun Hitters Award

Late afternoon on November 1, 1996, prominent Tucson businessman Gary Triano was golfing with friends at the Westin La Paloma Country Club. At the same time, his family was planning a surprise birthday party for him at home. He said goodbye to his golfing buddies and returned to his car to drive home. As soon as he turned on the ignition, he was blown to pieces by a remotely detonated improvised explosive device (IED) that had been placed in his car. Triano died instantly.

Although the Pima County Sheriff's Department collected every piece of debris that might have any connection to the crime, and called on the expertise of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to reconstruct the bomb, the powerful explosion obliterated virtually every trace of physical evidence, leaving no link to a suspect. Law enforcement officers and agents collected and sifted through hundreds of thousands of papers attempting to connect someone to Triano's death. They interviewed hundreds of individuals: everyone who was at the country club that day, everyone who ever had any business dealings with Triano, and anyone who might have any reason, no matter how remote, to want him dead.

Gary Triano was a real estate speculator and developer who made millions. But after the real estate market declined, he lost control of his investments and went broke. He owed money to a variety of different people, including some tied to organized crime. When he no longer could afford the lifestyle to which she had become accustomed, his socialite wife, Pamela Phillips, filed for divorce.

Eventually law enforcement determined the one person who most benefitted from the crime was Gary Triano's former wife, Pamela Phillips. Even after divorce, Phillips remained the beneficiary on Triano's \$2 million dollar life insurance policy, making the premium payments herself. Pamela Phillips then moved to Aspen, Colorado where she met Ronald Young, and together they hatched a plan to kill Triano and collect on the policy. Phillips was living in Colorado when the explosion occurred.

Soon after the murder, Ronald Young was on the run from a Colorado warrant on fraud charges. During this time, Pamela Phillips was sending him money for the hit, eventually totaling \$400,000.

The investigation into Triano's killing stalled and remained unsolved. There was motive to suspect Phillips, but no evidence yet connecting her to her ex-husband's murder. In 2005, the Pima County Sheriff's Department and Pima County Attorney's Office created a joint Cold Case Unit, designated the Triano murder as a high priority and reexamined the entire file and every shred of evidence. At the same time, a break happened in the case. Ronald Young was arrested in Florida on the Colorado fraud charges. Young's computer was taken into evidence and a forensic examination revealed that he kept detailed records of his financial transactions with Phillips, as well as recorded telephone conversations and various invoices.

Slowly, a clear vision of the events surrounding the murder emerged. Cold Case Unit members were able to link together compelling evidence that pointed to a murder conspiracy by Phillips and hit-man Ronald Young. The evidence revealed a detailed plan for Young to collect money from Phillips for Triano's murder, and an even more

complex plan to transfer funds from Phillips to Young in relatively small amounts over the next seven years. However, Phillips had received the \$2 million insurance payout and after Young's arrest, left Aspen for a life in Europe. She was arrested in Austria in 2009 and extradited to Tucson.

Prosecutors and law enforcement had finally successfully linked sufficient evidence of a Conspiracy to Murder to Phillips and Young and a grand jury indictment was sought. The family of Gary Triano had waited 12 years for justice.

The trial of Ronald Young began in February 2010 and ended with the jury finding him guilty of conspiracy to commit first degree murder and guilty of first degree murder of Gary Triano. Young was sentenced to prison for his natural life.

Shortly after Pamela Phillips' return to Tucson to stand trial, the assigned prosecutor, who had worked this case for over five years, retired. Newly assigned prosecutors, Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green inherited the case in January 2013. Unklesbay and Green were unfamiliar with this case, with its tens of thousands of pages of disclosure and three hundred of boxes of evidence. They were fresh eyes tackling the tremendously complicated case.

Unklesbay and Green had to quickly learn and review a case that consisted of more than a decade of investigation, more than 300,000 pages of documentation, thousands of photographs, and hundreds of interviews, and more than 200 witnesses – a seemingly insurmountable feat. They also had to contend with an independent investigation launched by defense counsel. In an effort to acquit their client, the defense postulated multiple exculpatory theories of alternative perpetrators and produced reams of new documentation from federal investigations (FBI, ATF, and the Secret Service) and from their own far-reaching investigation. Never ones to waiver, Unklesbay and Green met the challenge head on. They reviewed all the evidence submitted by the defense and interviewed numerous witnesses to test the defense theories, all of which proved to be bogus.

The trial began in February 2014. Unklesbay and Green presented powerful circumstantial evidence tying Phillips to a plot to kill her ex-husband and collect the \$2 million dollar life insurance money. They chronicled a story of gold-digging, greed and arrogance and revealed Phillips to be a manipulative and materialistic woman who masterminded the death of her ex-husband resulting in one of Tucson's most notorious crimes.

They showed how, as Triano's businesses crumbled, and the couple divorced, and Phillips was no longer getting enough money from Triano to support her lavish life style, she became frustrated and angry, and told friends that she could have Gary Triano taken out.

Unklesbay and Green presented evidence of hit-man Ronald Young continuously pressuring Phillips for payment. Because Young had saved emails, recordings of phone calls, and financial records on his computer, the prosecutors had the evidence to prosecute Phillips. They meticulously linked the timing and coded contents of emails and phone calls to the timing of cash withdrawals by Phillips from her bank to the FedEx transmittals sending the hit money from her to Young.

They found a recording where Young angrily threatened to expose Phillips if she did not keep up with the payments. He told Phillips in a recorded phone conversation that he could literally dig up evidence that would send her to a women's prison for murder. Phillips' defense attorneys tried to build doubt in the minds of the jurors that Phillips had hired a hit man to murder her ex-husband. Her attorneys tried to convince jurors there was reasonable doubt about her guilt, and they attempted to build a case against someone else – a dead, vengeful, drug addicted business associate of Triano's, who hired someone to pull off the bombing.

Phillips' defense team also told jurors that, after years with no one being charged with Triano's murder, prosecutors took the easy route of trying to pin the crime on an angry ex-wife, rather than tackling the tough job of building a case against organized crime and people angry with Triano about failed financial dealings.

But, after eighteen years of investigation, more than seven weeks of trial, hundreds of witnesses, hundreds of items of evidence, and 13 cumulative hours of deliberation, the jury reached a decision in the Pamela Phillips murder-for-hire trial.

The family and friends of Gary Triano finally heard the words they'd been waiting almost two decades to hear: "We find the defendant Pamela Anne Phillips GUILTY of conspiracy to commit first degree murder as alleged in count one of the indictment. We find the defendant Pamela Anne Phillips GUILTY of first degree murder as alleged in count two of the indictment."

Phillips will not receive the death penalty because Austria refused to extradite unless the death penalty was taken off the table.

On May 22, 2014, this once prominent socialite convicted of first degree murder in the 1996 car bomb killing of her ex-husband was sentenced to natural life in prison without the possibility of parole, and also sentenced to 25 years to life for conspiracy to commit murder.

This was an outstanding team effort and could not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of Deputy County Attorneys Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green, as well as the entire Cold Case Unit who worked for almost two decades to get justice for the family and hold Phillips accountable for murder.

The unrelenting dedication and determination shown by Unklesbay and Green are not only exemplary, but raise the standard for all prosecutors nationwide. For their exceptional commitment to justice and for the exemplary service provided to the residents of Pima County, I am honored to nominate Rick Unklesbay and Nicol Green for NDAA's 2014 Homerun Hitters Award.

Submitted by: Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney



Photo Above, listed from left to right: Rick Unklesbay, Detective Keith St. John, Nicol Green, NDAA President Henry Garza, Syracuse District Attorney, William Fitzpatrick and Pima County Attorney, Barbara LaWall.

