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Central District of California

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Beverly Hills Man Pleads Guilty to Charge for Attempting to Hire Hitman to Murder a Woman He Briefly Dated but Later Rebuffed Him

LOS ANGELES – A Beverly Hills man pleaded guilty today to a federal murder-for-hire charge for attempting to hire a hitman to kill a woman he briefly dated and who repeatedly tried to break off their relationship.

Scott Quinn Berkett, 25, pleaded guilty to one count of use of interstate facilities to commit murder-for-hire.

According to the affidavit in support of a criminal complaint in this case, Berkett met the victim online in 2020, and the woman flew to Los Angeles to meet Berkett in late October 2020. The victim, who described Berkett's behavior as "sexually aggressive," tried on several occasions to break off the relationship following the October trip, the affidavit states.

In April 2021, a family member, who had learned that Berkett continued to contact the victim, called and sent text messages to Berkett's father's phone, and, on April 20, Berkett appears to have responded saying "consider this matter closed."

Berkett admitted in his plea agreement that, soon afterward in April 2021, he solicited and paid for murder-for-hire services via a website on the darknet that purportedly offered such services. Berkett provided the darknet group with specific directions and details about his target. As payment for the victim's murder, Berkett send the darknet group bitcoin payments totaling approximately \$13,000.

In May 2021, an undercover law enforcement officer contacted Berkett while posing as the hitman Berkett believed he had hired from the darknet group. The undercover officer sent Berkett pictures of the victim. Berkett confirmed that the pictures showed his intended victim and that he had made bitcoin payments to obtain her murder. Berkett further requested proof of her murder and made an additional \$1,000 payment to the undercover officer via Western Union for her death.

United States District Judge Mark C. Scarsi scheduled a September 12 sentencing hearing, at which time Berkett will face a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison.

The FBI investigated this matter.

Assistant United States Attorney Kathy Yu of the Violent and Organized Crime Section is prosecuting this case.

Topic(s):

Violent Crime

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