

# Chicago Tribune

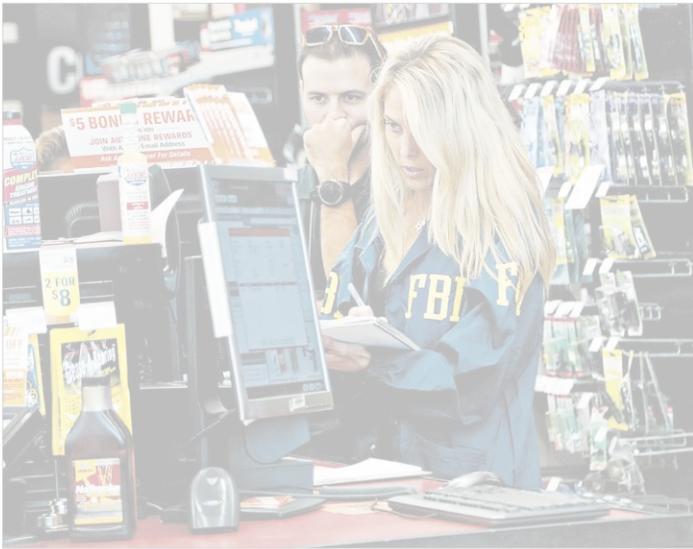
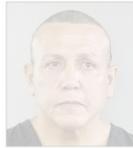


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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2018

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Suspect held in mail bomb plot



AMY BETH BENNETT/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

An FBI agent examines a computer at the auto parts store in Plantation, Fla., where Cesar Sayoc, 56, was arrested Friday in connection with more than a dozen bombs sent to critics of President Donald Trump, seemingly capping an investigation into a bizarre series of attacks.

### Authorities say print, DNA link Fla. man to 'IEDs' targeting prominent Democrats

BY DEVLIN BARRETT, MARK BERMAN AND MATT ZAPOTOSKY  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A man in Florida with a lengthy criminal record was arrested and charged Friday with sending 13 packages containing improvised explosive devices to high-profile figures across the country, authorities said.

Authorities arrested 56-year-old Cesar Sayoc, who according to Florida records has a criminal record dating back decades that included including a past arrest for making a bomb threat. Sayoc was charged Friday with

transporting explosives across state lines, illegally mailing explosives, threatening former presidents and others, threatening interstate communications and assaulting federal officials, according to charging documents. He could face decades in prison if convicted. At a joint news conference with various law enforcement officials, FBI Director Christopher Wray referred to the 13 explosive devices recovered so far as "IEDs," an abbreviation for improvised explosive devices. He said investigators were able to

### Man with a past

Suspect in bombing plot variously described as "loner," "lunatic." Page 6

trace Sayoc after finding a fingerprint on an envelope containing a bomb sent to Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., and that DNA found on two of the devices was a possible match to a sample taken from Sayoc during an earlier arrest. Inside the packages sent to

## 'It was killing for the sake of killing'

Feds charge South Side gang faction in 10 Englewood slayings

BY JASON MEISNER AND ANNIE SWEENEY  
Chicago Tribune

Lifelong Englewood resident Gerald Sias Jr. was getting his hair cut in a popular neighborhood barbershop on a Thursday afternoon two years ago when a gunman suddenly appeared in the doorway and opened fire. Bullets whizzed into Powell's Barber Shop on West 63rd Street as patrons scrambled to hide behind chairs. Sias, 38, a father of five with no gang ties, was struck in the arm and died later at a nearby hospital. Another customer was wounded in the leg.

A federal racketeering indictment made public Friday alleged Sias' May 2016 slaying was one of 10 killings carried out by a South Side street gang faction during a three-year reign of terror in the Englewood community that targeted rivals and innocent victims.

The 25-page indictment — first reported by the Chicago Tribune — charges four reputed members of the Goonie Boss faction of the Gangster Disciples with racketeering conspiracy and alleges six attempted murders, two assaults and other violence in addition to the killings — all in or near Englewood from 2014 to 2016.

Unlike traditional racketeering cases that accuse gang members of using violence to protect drug turf or other illicit enterprises, the charges against the Goonie Boss members alleged they shot people simply to boost their social media brand. "It was killing for the sake of killing," said Chicago police Sgt. Charles Daly, who helped put the case together.

Among the evidence is a disturbing video that was streamed live on Facebook following the January 2016 murder of a Goonie Squad rival. In the video, about a dozen members of the gang, some as young as 14, wave guns in front of the camera and dance as they taunt the victim, chanting, "How the f--- did he get hit?" and "One in the head, no lie!"

Other victims, like Sias, were just at the wrong place at the wrong time, according to the

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Letter: Administrations knew information for months before acting  
BY MICHAEL HAWTHORNE  
Chicago Tribune

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ZBIGNIEW BZDAK/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Neighbors of the Sterigenics plant in Willowbrook pack a hearing Friday in Chicago's Loop called by state lawmakers.

Disclosure of the previously unknown warning about Sterigenics comes as angry and frightened neighbors packed a hearing Friday in the Loop called by state lawmakers who are scrambling to respond to health dangers in a swath of suburban Chicago that also is a key battleground in the Nov. 6 election. Other records obtained by the Tribune show the Rauner administration worked behind the

scenes with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency between December and August on a more intensive investigation of Sterigenics and discussed potential solutions to the company's pollution problems. State officials ended up deferring to political appointees in President Donald Trump's administration to determine when and how the public was told about what insiders understood

## Slain restaurant owner hailed as loving, caring

Friend in car says gunman 'just pulled up and started firing'

BY ANGIE LEVENTIS LOURGOS, ROBERT MCCOPPIN AND AMANDA MARRAZZO  
Chicago Tribune

Family and friends remember Peter Rim — the owner of several popular suburban restaurants, who was fatally shot Thursday on the Northwest Side of Chicago — as the kind of man who cared for everyone.

"The idea of taking the shirt off your back and giving it to somebody, he did that for all who needed it," said Rim's friend and roommate Kurt Anderson, who said he witnessed the shooting. "That was the beauty of Peter himself."

Rim, 46, suffered a gunshot wound to the head when someone in an SUV pulled up and opened fire in the 4100 block of West Diversey Avenue around



BISTRO WAKASU RESTAURANT

Restaurant owner Peter Rim was fatally shot Thursday on Chicago's Northwest Side.

6:45 a.m. Thursday, police said. The gunman said something before firing, but Rim, who suffered from hearing loss, apparently could not understand, police said. They did not know if that was why he was shot.

Turn to Rim, Page 5

Cook County jury convicts serial rapist of 1981 fatal stabbing of North Side woman [ChicagoLand, Page 3](#)

Bears list Mack, Robinson as questionable for Sunday's home game against Jets [Chicago Sports](#)



Tom Skilling's forecast High 55 Low 45

Chicago Weather Center: Complete forecast on back of Chicago Sports

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## Gang faction charged in 10 killings

Killings, from Page 1

charges. At Sias' longtime family home on South Carpenter Street, his father, Gerald Sr., said Friday his son was simply trying to get his hair cut for a party on the day he was killed. Asked about the allegations that the gunmen were committing violence simply for street status, the father called the situation "crazy."

"You wake up and put your clothes on to go kill somebody that don't never done nothing to you? That's crazy," he said as he stood in his living room with framed photos of his son as a baby and as a toddler still prominently displayed.

According to the indictment, the alleged leader of the Goonie Boss crew was Romeo "O-Dog" Blackman, 22, who was already in custody on federal weapons charges. Also charged with racketeering were Terrance Smith, 22, Jolicious "Jo Jo" Turman, 27, and Nathaniel McElroy, 21.

The charges implicated Blackman in at least seven of the murders. The charges carry the potential of a death sentence on conviction, but prosecutors have not yet decided whether to seek capital punishment, law enforcement sources told the Tribune.

The investigation was a

joint effort by federal law enforcement, Chicago police and the Cook County state's attorney's office. In addition to the federal racketeering charges, a fifth defendant was charged in Cook County criminal court with an 11th murder.

At a news conference to announce the charges at the Englewood District police station, Jeffrey Sallet, head of Chicago's FBI office, said the federal racketeering statute can help law enforcement hold gang members like the Goonies accountable in the same way it was used to decimate more traditional crime syndicates like the Chicago Outfit.

"We are bringing the full weight of the federal government to violence that is plaguing these neighborhoods," said Sallet, flanked by Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, Chicago police Superintendent Eddie Johnson and U.S. Attorney John Lausch Jr. "We are looking for you, and our people are going to find you."

In a sign of the fractured and often fickle nature of gang cliques in Chicago, the case was built largely on social media and jail calls, not traditional wiretaps. And unlike some recent gang racketeering cases, the charges alleged the Goonie Boss gang committed a stag-

gering amount of violence in a short period of time.

Sgt. Dady who also helped bring racketeering charges against the Black Souls several years ago, noted that case spanned 30 years' worth of violence allegedly committed to protect a narcotics enterprise.

"The Goonies murdered as many if not more, in the span of three years just to protect their social media status," he said.

Blackman's attorney, Christopher Grohman, who said Friday that his client was still a teenager when most of the alleged violence occurred, questioned how prosecutors could consider him a gang leader at such a young age. He also criticized the government for bringing what could wind up being a death-penalty case.

McElroy's attorney, Joshua Kutnick, had no comment on the charges Friday. It was unclear if the other two federal defendants had hired attorneys.

Court records show Blackman is already in custody on separate federal charges alleging he took part in a brazen smash-and-grab burglary of weapons from a gun store in Livingston County in 2016. According to those charges, he and two associates smashed a stolen Jeep into South Post Guns in Streator before

making off with 20 weapons, including a shotgun, a military-style assault rifle, eight pistols and 10 revolvers. The three later distributed some of the guns in Englewood and kept the rest, police said.

Blackman, who has been held at the Metropolitan Correctional Center since his arrest in April 2017, has pleaded not guilty in that case, records show.

McElroy, meanwhile, is also facing separate charges stemming from an alleged gun-trafficking ring that used "straw purchasers" to buy handguns in Kalamazoo, Mich., and resell them in Chicago. Those charges allege that the crew was responsible for at least nine of the Michigan-bought handguns making it to the streets of Chicago in the first six months of 2017 alone.

At a detention hearing in that case last year, prosecutors played Facebook Live videos showing McElroy and other Goonie Boss members brandishing firearms, taunting rivals and laughing about committing acts of violence, court records show. U.S. Magistrate Judge Susan Cox said she found the "glee and exuberance" on the gang members' faces appalling, according to a transcript.

"I have never seen anything like this in my life,"



TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx and U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois John Lausch Jr. speak Friday at the Englewood District police station.

Cox said. "It is shocking to me that you could laugh about a gun like it is a toy... Some of those kids look like they were 14 or 15 years old. And this is their life?"

According to the charges, the innocent targets of the gang included Kenneth Whitaker, shot twice in the head in July 2016 while walking past an elementary school at 74th and Morgan streets. At the time, the Goonies were out for revenge after one of their own had been slain earlier that night, sources told the Tribune. They had just left a nearby hospital when they opened fire on Whitaker, 34, a security guard with no gang ties.

Reached Thursday evening, Whitaker's mother, Vickie, said she had long suspected her son had been the victim of mistaken identity. "He was a good young

man, not affiliated with any gangs," she said. "He was just trying to make money and take care of his kids."

Meanwhile, Gerald Sias Sr., whose son was slain in the barbershop, said their family moved to Englewood in the 1960s and decided to stay despite the constant threat of violence. Now a medical transport driver, Sias said there is no comprehending the violence that tore his family apart.

"I think about my son all the time," he said. As he spoke, he brought out a pressed white dress shirt with Gerald Jr.'s image on the back. Underneath it black lettering read, "Love You Son."

Chicago Tribune's Rosemary Sobol contributed.

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## Sterigenics cancer risks reportedly withheld from public for months

Sterigenics, from Page 1

months earlier, the records show.

In the Dec. 22 letter, sent to a Sterigenics executive, a top official in the U.S. EPA's Chicago office outlines the results of a preliminary federal analysis linking unusually high cancer risks in the Willowbrook area to the company's emissions of ethylene oxide, a potent gas used to sterilize medical instruments, pharmaceuticals and food.

Copied on the letter is Julie Armitage, chief of the

Illinois EPA air bureau. EPA has calculated a cancer risk of approximately 1,000 in a million at the nearest residence, exceeding our typical upper limit of cancer risk acceptability," wrote Ed Nam, director of the regional U.S. EPA air and radiation division. "EPA would like to provide Sterigenics with the opportunity to review our modeling and to suggest improvements for accuracy."

Federal regulators generally target polluters when local cancer risks are great-

er than 100 in a million. Based on air samples collected in May in neighborhoods near Sterigenics, an arm of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined the cancer risks from breathing ethylene oxide pollution could be orders of magnitude higher than estimated: up to 6,400 per million, or more than six cases of cancer for every 1,000 people.

The Illinois EPA responded to the report by quietly giving Sterigenics a permit to voluntarily install

new pollution-control equipment, making it more difficult for authorities to pursue legal action against the company unless it can be shown the fix has failed to eliminate health risks from ethylene oxide pollution.

Sterigenics says recent testing found the new equipment has substantially reduced its emissions of the dangerous gas. "Sterigenics' Willowbrook facility operates safely today as it has throughout its history," the company declares on a webpage that attempts to sow

doubt about the EPA's conclusions and suggests more people would die from hospital infections if the facility was shut down.

Federal officials say the company released uncontrolled amounts of ethylene oxide from building vents for more than 30 years. In 2016, after a decade-long review of peer-reviewed scientific studies, the EPA declared the volatile chemical poses long-term cancer risks at extremely low levels.

About 19,000 people live within a mile of the Willowbrook facility. Four schools and a day care center also are close by, including Hinsdale South High School in Darien and Gower Middle School in Burr Ridge.

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"This was like an information dirty bomb that was dropped on my desk," said Willowbrook Mayor Frank Trilla, who noted the U.S. EPA informed him about the cancer risk report an hour before it was posted online in late August. "We had no way to prepare for that. They don't teach that in a mayor's school."

Gabriela Tejeda-Rios, a lawyer who has lived a half block from Sterigenics for nine years, said she has read studies suggesting a link between exposure to ethylene oxide and the type of chronic headaches her two daughters, ages 9 and 11, have suffered since their early days in public schools that also are close to the facility.

"Every single symptom my family and I have experienced in the past number of years has been associated with ethylene oxide," Tejeda-Rios said, referring to websites created by federal and state officials that note children are particularly at risk. "I live in constant fear and worry and guilt. My children have been exposed to this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and I cannot protect them from it."

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Asked Thursday about the December letter, spokespersons for the federal and state agencies said

they delayed informing the public because they wanted to make sure the initial U.S. EPA estimates were correct.

"Without additional analysis from USEPA, EPA was not in a position to take action," Kim Biggs, a spokeswoman for the state agency, said in an email.

"The Illinois EPA is very concerned about potential adverse health impacts that may be caused by the operations of Sterigenics and is committed to doing everything within our authority to bring all possible relief to Willowbrook and the surrounding communities."

The federal agency said the December letter was intended to give Sterigenics a chance to respond to the EPA's concerns before the public release of its analysis.

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# Chicago Tribune

Oct. 27, 2018

## **Sterigenics cancer risks held back from public**

Letter: Administrations knew information for months before acting

By Michael Hawthorne

Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration knew in December that toxic air pollution from the Sterigenics plant in west suburban Willowbrook likely was responsible for some of the highest cancer risks in the nation, according to a letter obtained by the Tribune.

The governor's office and the Rauner-led Illinois Environmental Protection Agency kept the politically explosive information from the public for eight months, then initially downplayed the dangers posed by a company owned in part by the incumbent Republican's former private equity firm.

Disclosure of the previously unknown warning about Sterigenics comes as angry and frightened neighbors packed a hearing Friday in the Loop called by state lawmakers who are scrambling to respond to health dangers in a swath of suburban Chicago that also is a key battleground in the Nov. 6 election.

Other records obtained by the Tribune show the Rauner administration worked behind the scenes with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency between December and August on a more intensive investigation of Sterigenics and discussed potential solutions to the company's pollution problems.

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