

Myles Connor accused of new jail escape bid

By Elizabeth Neuffer
Globe Staff

Myles J. Connor Jr., Massachusetts' infamous art thief, former rock band leader and bail jumper, was foiled in an escape attempt from an Illinois jail Monday, federal authorities said yesterday.

But unlike a prior escape from a Maine jail in which Connor used a gun fashioned from a bar of soap, the Milton native allegedly had planned to use four hacksaw blades, smuggled to him in a book, to saw through the steel ceiling of his cell. But US marshals acting

on a tip discovered the blades hidden under a sink in his cell in the Menard County jail in Petersburg, authorities said.

US marshals arrested Margo Konces, 45, of South Weymouth, and Suzanne Marie King, 26, of Georgetown, Ky., on charges of assisting in the escape.

The alleged escape plot is yet another wrinkle in the career of the 43-year-old Connor, who is awaiting trial in Illinois on six charges of drug distribution and transportation of stolen property. Connor has spent about 11 of the past 20 years in prison or jail for violations ranging from art theft, escapes, wounding a policeman in a shootout, parole violations, bail-jumping and the kidnapping and murders of two Jamaica Plain teen-agers. His murder and bank robbery convictions were later overturned.

Yesterday, J. William Roberts, the US attorney for the Central District of Illinois, told reporters there that evidence will be evaluated and presented to a grand jury. Attorneys said no charges have been brought against Connor yet.

According to an affidavit filed by Mark A. McClish, a deputy US marshal in Illinois, Konces and King, Connor's girlfriend, collaborated with Connor in the escape attempt.

On June 10, Konces mailed a book containing the hacksaw blades to Connor's cellmate, Lester Prier, the affidavit said. King then arranged to meet Connor at the Menard County Fairgrounds along with a change of clothes, hair dye, a razor and a revolver, it

said.

King was to identify herself as the "girl with the little yellow dog." The code for Connor's escape was "the eagle has landed," according to the affidavit.

The affidavit said Illinois authorities discovered the blades Monday when they searched Connor's cell. They also discovered that a 4- to 5-inch cut had been made in the ceiling of the cell.

An informant who tipped authorities off to the escape attempt acted as a go-between in the planning, receiving collect phone calls from Konces and directing her and King to a site at the fairgrounds, the affidavit said. King was arrested Tuesday after a deputy US marshal, posing as an escapee, asked her if she was "the girl with the little yellow dog."

Konces was arrested about 3:30 p.m. yesterday in Boston by US marshals and Weymouth police. She made an initial appearance before US Magistrate Joyce London Alexander and was held without bail pending a hearing tomorrow.

After the hearing, Konces told reporters: "I'm not guilty of any of this. I knew this fellow 22 years ago."

In Springfield, Ill., chief deputy Marshal Don Lamb said he plans to move Connor to the Sangamon County jail there. "We always utilize utmost security for all our prisoners," Lamb said yesterday when asked about the alleged escape attempt. But he added: "These kinds of things can happen."

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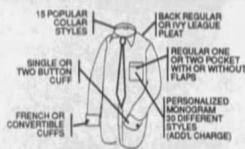
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