

"My guess is it ultimately has to total millions of dollars," said Edgar

Samuels, said a vice president and general counsel at Stop & Shop. "We don't feel

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## US reportedly wants to talk to Connor on Gardner theft

By Ric Kahn  
GLOBE STAFF

Federal authorities investigating the 1990 heist of precious artworks from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum are trying to negotiate a meeting with Myles J. Connor Jr., who is imprisoned for stealing paintings and selling drugs, sources close to Connor said yesterday.

Investigators have already met twice with William Youngsworth III, an ex-convict and associate of Connor's who has also offered to help broker the return of the Gardner paintings in exchange for immunity from prosecution and millions of dollars in reward money.

Federal authorities yesterday declined to comment specifically on any aspect of the investigation.

"We are willing to talk to anybody with information about the Gardner," said Peter Ginieres, a spokesman for the FBI in Boston. "We would not want any strings attached when the information is presented to us."

In March 1990, two men disguised as police officers stole artworks from the Gardner valued at \$200 million, including "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee," a Rembrandt masterpiece.

In the aftermath, Connor's name surfaced as a suspect, even though he was in jail at the time.

Some investigators believed Connor, a onetime musician and former murder suspect, had masterminded the heist from behind bars.

Though one person close to Connor said yesterday that Connor would not position himself to impli-

cate anyone in the theft, another source said that stance would not prevent the inmate from talking to authorities if the right deal came along.

In the early 1970s, Connor was charged with stealing Andrew Wyeth paintings from an estate in Maine. He pleaded guilty but got a lenient sentence after he allegedly helped arrange the return of a stolen Rembrandt, valued at \$1 million, to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

"It looks like he's trying to repeat the success he had in that enterprise," a source close to Connor said yesterday.

The source said that even if Connor does have inside information, it doesn't mean he was directly responsible for the Gardner theft.

Meanwhile, Youngsworth's lawyer said yesterday his client was trying to negotiate another meeting with law enforcement officials to discuss the stolen paintings. Sources familiar with the investigation say Youngsworth has not offered anything substantial, but authorities want the talks to continue.

Howard Lewis, Youngsworth's lawyer, has accused police and prosecutors of trumping up charges against his client to squeeze information from him about the Gardner heist.

Youngsworth, an antiques dealer, was charged with illegal possession of marijuana and antique firearms after authorities raided his shop earlier this month.

*Stephen Kurkjian of the Globe staff contributed to this report.*

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