

Husband of missing Connecticut mom charged with her murder

By Dave Collins and Chris Ehrmann | AP

The story of Jennifer Dulos, a missing mother of five, gripped Connecticut and many around the country for months as police divulged a mountain of evidence against her estranged husband, but without filing a murder charge.

After she disappeared May 24, Fotis Dulos gave interviews to national media outlets denying involvement and saying he hoped she was still alive. His lawyer, Norman Pattis, also offered up a theory that Jennifer Dulos may have faked her own death to frame her husband during contentious divorce and child custody proceedings -- outraging her family.

On Tuesday, Connecticut state police charged Fotis Dulos with murder, felony murder and kidnapping in connection with Jennifer Dulos' death, despite her body never being found. Authorities also lodged murder conspiracy charges against his former girlfriend, Michelle Troconis, and his friend, attorney Kent Mawhinney. All three are expected to be arraigned in Stamford Superior

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Court on Wednesday.

Disclosed in arrest warrants on Tuesday was a determination by Chief Medical Examiner James Gill that Jennifer Dulos likely was killed by "some combination of traumatic, blunt-force injuries such as a bludgeoning/beating, and/or sharp-force injuries such as a stabbing/slashing." Gill concluded there was so much blood loss -- evidenced by bloodstains at her home, apparent cleanup efforts and blood spatter analysis -- that there was no way Jennifer Dulos would have survived without medical treatment.

It had been public knowledge for months, from information in another arrest warrant, that Fotis Dulos was recorded on surveillance video in Hartford, with Troconis riding with him in a pickup truck, disposing of items that later tested positive for Jennifer Dulos' blood.

State police arrested Fotis Dulos, 52, at his Farmington home on Tuesday and detained him in lieu of \$6 million bail. Troconis and Mawhinney were

both held on \$2 million bond.

Police declined to take any questions from the media at a news conference Tuesday, saying they were barred by a gag order issued in the case.

Pattis said he was not surprised by the arrests but does not believe prosecutors can make the charges stick.

“What these charges tell us is the state has evidence and doesn’t know what to make of it,” he said. “And what it intends to do is throw as much against the wall and let the jury decide what happened. Our position is that’s not good enough for Fotis Dulos.”

Messages seeking comment were left with Troconis’ attorney and the office of Mawhinney.

According to arrest warrants, Mawhinney had a prearranged meeting with Fotis Dulos on the morning of his wife’s disappearance, was at Fotis Dulos’s office and had his cellphone with him. He also was mentioned in what police described as “alibi notes” found in the trash at Fotis Dulos’ business, according to the warrants.

Mawhinney once represented Fotis Dulos in lawsuits filed by Jennifer Dulos’ mother, who claims Fotis Dulos never repaid her late husband for about \$3 million in loans he gave Fotis Dulos to develop expensive

homes.

Mawhinney is charged in another case with sexually assaulting his estranged wife in South Windsor last year and violating a protective order. He has pleaded not guilty. In court documents in those cases, Jennifer Dulos told authorities she believed Mawhinney was plotting to have her killed and Fotis Dulos made contact with her as part of the plot.

Previously, Fotis Dulos and Troconis, 44, were charged with evidence tampering and hindering prosecution in connection with Jennifer Dulos’ disappearance. They pleaded not guilty and posted bond.

Arrest warrants for those charges revealed the array of evidence police have compiled in the case, including the items found in Hartford that contained Jennifer Dulos’ blood.

Authorities also have traffic and school bus camera footage of a man they believe was Fotis Dulos driving a pickup truck to New Canaan on the morning Jennifer Dulos disappeared; surveillance video of Fotis Dulos getting the truck washed and detailed days after she vanished; and evidence that Jennifer Dulos’ DNA was found on the truck’s passenger seat, according to the warrant.

State’s Attorney Richard Colangelo Jr. said in court last year that Jennifer Dulos’ blood

also was found mixed with Fotis Dulos’ DNA on the kitchen sink faucet of her home in New Canaan.

Fotis and Jennifer Dulos had been in the middle of a contentious two-year divorce at the time of her disappearance. A probate judge in November granted custody of their children to their maternal grandmother, Gloria Farber.

Fotis Dulos filed a motion last month seeking to dismiss the divorce case because there has been no activity for nearly six months. A hearing in that case had been scheduled for Thursday.

Family and friends of Jennifer Dulos released a statement on Tuesday afternoon thanking police for their work leading to the arrests.

“Although we are relieved that the wait for these charges is over, for us there is no sense of closure,” spokeswoman Carrie Luft said. “Nothing can bring Jennifer back. We miss her every day and will forever mourn her loss. We believe the arrest warrants will speak for themselves, and we ask that you please respect our privacy during this time.”

Fotis Dulos and Troconis were both brought to the state police barracks in Bridgeport to be booked.

Shortly after Fotis Dulos’ arrest,

New Canaan Police issued a one word Tweet — “Justice!” ■