



**SUNPOWER**  
by BlueSel Home Solar

Beat The Salty Sea Air  
**With Our**  
Non-corrosive Panels

Go Solar Today

## 'Whitey' Bulger dead: Inmate with Mafia ties investigated in killing



By [Shelley Murphy](#) and [Kevin Cullen](#)

GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 30, 2018

Within hours of his arrival at a federal prison in West Virginia, gangster [James "Whitey" Bulger](#) was beaten to death by inmates Tuesday in an attack that marks the final, brutal chapter in the life of one of Boston's most notorious villains.

Two inmates were under investigation in the attack, [including Fotios "Freddy" Geas](#), 51, a West Springfield Mafia hit man serving a life sentence for the 2003 slaying of the leader of the Genovese crime family in Springfield, according to several people briefed on the attack. The men were captured on video surveillance entering Bulger's cell around 6 a.m., according to one of the people.

It was about two hours later that Bulger was found beaten, with his eyes nearly gouged out, the people

said.

ADVERTISEMENT



Bulger, 89, was convicted in 2013 of participating in 11 slayings while running a sprawling criminal organization in Boston from the 1970s through the 1990s.

Get **Metro Headlines** in your inbox:

The 10 top local news stories from metro Boston and around New England delivered daily.

Sign Up

Authorities provided few details about the killing or why Bulger, who was serving a life sentence, had been transferred to the US Penitentiary Hazelton, [just weeks after a Washington, D.C., congresswoman had called for an investigation into conditions at the prison, where two other inmates had been killed this year.](#)

Hazelton is a high-security prison in Bruceton Mills, W.Va., near the Maryland border, where tall brown grass grows by the side of the road. On Tuesday night, six officers, all of whom wore helmets and bulletproof vests, stood in front of two barriers that blocked off the meandering road toward the facility.

In a statement, the US Bureau of Prisons said Bulger was found unresponsive at the prison at 8:20

RELATED LINKS



**Photos: James 'Whitey' Bulger in custody**  
**Read: Obituary: The long and deadly career of James J. 'Whitey' Bulger**  
**Read: A timeline of 'Whitey' Bulger's crimes and capture**  
**Read: 2015: 'Whitey' Bulger letter to students:**

Tuesday morning.

“Life-saving measures were initiated immediately by

responding staff. Mr. Bulger was subsequently pronounced dead by the Preston County medical examiner,” the agency said. No staff or other inmates were injured.

**‘My life was wasted’**

**Read: 2016: ‘Whitey’ Bulger disciplined at Florida prison for sexual activity**

ADVERTISEMENT



Bulger had a long history as an FBI informant who provided information about his Mafia rivals to help protect his own violent criminal enterprise. To many, the circumstances of his death raised suspicions.

“Obviously it is very strange he got moved from one federal prison to another and ends up dead 24 hours after arriving there,” said Michael Von Zamft, a prosecutor in the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s office and part of the team that sent Bulger’s FBI handler to prison for murder.

He said federal authorities’ investigation into Bulger’s death will need to determine “whether this just happens to be a coincidence or there is something more.”

As of late Tuesday, no charges had been announced in the attack. Geas and the other inmate had been placed in lockdown pending the investigation, according to a person familiar with the investigation.

Bulger had been sent to the West Virginia facility after a quick stop at an Oklahoma City transfer site.

Before that, he had been incarcerated at a Florida prison for several years. His health had been declining, prompting speculation that he was going to be moved to a federal medical facility, according to a person familiar with his situation.

ADVERTISEMENT

Instead, he was sent to USP Hazelton.

“He was sentenced to life in prison, but as a result of decisions by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, that sentence has been changed to the death penalty,” J.W. Carney Jr., Bulger’s defense lawyer in his federal trial, said in a statement.

Brian T. Kelly, a former federal prosecutor who was part of the team that prosecuted Bulger, said Bulger “lived a violent life and it’s not surprising that he would ultimately meet a violent death.”

“Prison is a violent place and informants are not too popular, so these things can obviously happen if proper precautions aren’t taken,” he said. “To suggest it’s a conspiracy of some sort by the government is

preposterous. He was in prison for seven years and this would be one slow-moving conspiracy.”

Relatives of Bulger's victims expressed little sympathy for the mobster, and some said it was just that Bulger died a violent death.

“There's one less scumbag on this earth,” said Patricia Donahue, whose husband, Michael, was gunned down by Bulger along the Boston waterfront in 1982 while giving a ride home to the gangster's intended target, Brian Halloran.

“They say you die the way you live, you know?” Donahue said. “I'm glad that he's dead, and I'm glad that he died the way he did.”

Bulger was being held in the general population housing unit of the prison, according to the head of the union who represents workers at the prison. Billy St. Croix, whose sister was killed by Bulger and St. Croix's father Stephen Flemmi, said he was surprised that authorities would place Bulger in the general population at a prison where Mafia members and associates were incarcerated.

“He obviously made a lot of enemies,” he said. “I get it, but it doesn't give me or my family any comfort. It doesn't bring my sister back.”

St. Croix said he and his mother felt sorry for Bulger's family.

“I take no pleasure in his death. None.”

The prison has come under scrutiny in recent months. An inmate was killed in a fight in September, and another inmate was killed in a fight in April, according to the Associated Press.

Richard Heldreth, president of Local 420 of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents union workers at the prison, said the prison usually averages one murder a year, but problems have been getting worse.

“This facility is severely understaffed,” he said.

Earlier this month, District of Columbia Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton called for Department of Justice Inspector General Michael Horowitz to investigate “the alleged appalling conditions inmates are facing” at the prison.

“Serious allegations have been raised concerning brutal treatment of inmates housed in the Special Housing Unit,” Norton wrote in a letter to Horowitz. “Based on the evidence presented to my office, I believe that the federal employees serving in this facility have likely received inadequate training, are under-supported, and are being compelled to perform duties outside the scope of their positions and their training, which is leading to these horrific and entirely unacceptable outcomes.”

After a federal jury convicted Bulger in 2013, he was sent to a high-security penitentiary in Arizona but soon ran into trouble because of an inappropriate relationship with a female psychologist who was counseling him. In 2014, he was transferred to US Penitentiary Coleman II in Sumterville, Fla. He remained there until last week, when the recent transfers began.

It's unclear why he was moved. One person familiar with the situation said Bulger's health had declined,

but another said he had also had disciplinary problems in Florida. The West Virginia prison is not a medical facility.

Bulger fled Boston just before his January 1995 racketeering indictment and was a fixture on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list until his capture in Santa Monica, Calif., in 2011. He and his girlfriend, Catherine Greig, had spent 16 years, passing themselves off as a retired couple, living in a rent-controlled apartment blocks from the beach.

Enrique Sanchez, who was maintenance supervisor at the Princess Eugenia complex where Bulger lived, said he was saddened by the news of Bulger's death.

"I feel bad," said Sanchez, now 70, in Spanish. "I'm going to remember him as a friend because that's what he always was to me. Everyone is going to remember him according to the experiences they had with him. Those he [hurt] will be happy. But he was always good with me."

Sanchez said he last heard from Bulger when Bulger wrote to him from prison in Arizona, saying he had been stabbed by other inmates, Sanchez said.

"I have to defend myself or they'll kill me," Sanchez recalled Bulger writing. "I told him to take care of himself because there is not a lack of people who want to kill you."

Sanchez said he tried writing him several times after that but the letters always came back. On Tuesday, Sanchez learned from his son that Bulger had died.

"This closes the chapter," Sanchez said. "It's the end of the novel."

## Related

■ **Photos: James 'Whitey' Bulger in custody**

■ **Obituary: The long and deadly career of James J. 'Whitey' Bulger**

■ **A timeline of 'Whitey' Bulger's crimes and capture**

■ **2015: 'Whitey' Bulger letter to students: 'My life was wasted'**

■ **2016: 'Whitey' Bulger disciplined at Florida prison for sexual activity**

■ **More on Bulger's death**

*Brian MacQuarrie, Maria Cramer, John R. Ellement, Travis Andersen, Emily Sweeney, Matt Rocheleau, Martin Finucane and Jess Bidgood of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Shelley Murphy can be reached at [shelley.murphy@globe.com](mailto:shelley.murphy@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter [@shelleymurph](https://twitter.com/shelleymurph). Kevin Cullen can be reached at [kevin.cullen@globe.com](mailto:kevin.cullen@globe.com).*

**SPONSORED BY ALLWAYS HEALTH PARTNERS**



**How Do Copays, Deductibles, and Out-of-Pocket Maximums Work?**

*By AllWays Health Partners - Here's a helpful guide to the terms for costs you may encounter as you receive care. [More](#)*

## Top 10 Trending Articles

Viewed	Commented	Shared
--------	-----------	--------

People in open-concept homes are realizing the walls were there for a reason

Ideas | Linda Rodriguez McRobbie: Too old to be president? Science says yes.

Mass. authorities face steep hurdles in shutting down sex trafficking

Here's what NFL free agent market looks like ahead of league's legal tampering period

The backyard mechanic who is taking on Tesla

Road to Recovery: Drugs took their children, but not their hope that others might be saved

Julia Ruth Stevens, Babe Ruth's last surviving child, dies at 102

This week in watching: The fall of 'Arrested Development,' the return of 'Billions,' and the power of punk

'Text me when you get home.' We shouldn't have to say it. But we do

Four unions representing Stop & Shop workers in southern New England have voted to OK strike

UMass plans national online college aimed at adult learners

Child of Shamima Begum, ISIS teenager trying to return to Britain, dies in Syria

The Patriots' biggest offseason needs — and how to fill them

GE's would-be HQ tower could be turned into labs

Electric dreams: Boston to New York in a Tesla, for \$99

Prosecutors detail disturbing evidence in case against Louis Coleman, charged with kidnapping Jassy Correia

Priest who used to work in Seekonk church placed on leave for 'inappropriate communications'

Northampton lawyer who defended nurse against death penalty set to represent Coleman

Kyrie Irving, Celtics finish off Lakers this time

'I'm just worthless. You want to throw my life away'

Sex trafficking is in plain sight in Massachusetts communities

Trump will seek more money for border wall

In N.H., Bernie Sanders says now 'Democratic candidates all across the board' support his ideas

Kyrie Irving, Celtics finish off Lakers this time

Baseball News, Scores, Analysis, Schedules & More

'SNL' tackles R. Kelly sex assault accusations with parody of CBS interview, Pete Davidson monologue

David Krejci's goal with 45 seconds left rallies Bruins

157 people, including 8 Americans, are believed dead in Ethiopian Airlines crash

Dana LeVangie the 'heart and soul' of Red Sox pitching staff

Merrimack, N.H., man allegedly impersonated police officers, first responders

**Most Popular In Metro** →

**Subscribe Now**

Digital Access

Home Delivery

Gift Subscriptions

**My Account**

---

[Manage my Account](#)

---

[Mobile Customer Service](#)

---

[Sign Up For Newsletters](#)

---

**Contact**

---

[Help](#)

---

[FAQs](#)

---

[Globe newsroom](#)

---

[Advertise](#)

---

[Order back issues](#)

---

**Social**

---

[Facebook](#)

---

[Twitter](#)

---

[Google+](#)

---

**More**

---

[ePaper](#)

---

[News in Education](#)

---

[Archives](#)

---

[Privacy policy](#)

---

[Terms of service](#)

---

[Terms of purchase](#)

---

[Work at Boston Globe Media](#)

---

© 2019 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC