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Pastor Arrested and Charged With His Wife's Murder Just Before He Boarded a Plane Out of the U.S.

Jan. 3, 2014 8:03am [Billy Hallowell](#)

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A Christian pastor was arrested on New Year's Day at Nashville International Airport Thursday and charged with his wife's murder.

Police believe that Richard Shahan, 53, was attempting to flee to Russia by way of Germany when Homeland Security ICE agents caught him before he boarded an airplane out of the country, [WTVF-TV reported](#).

The former preacher, who has been charged in his wife Karen Shahan's death, had already checked his luggage and passed through security when a computer flagged him and authorities swooped in to arrest him.

The Jan. 1 events came just one day after a warrant was issued and authorities placed Shahan's name in the Homeland Security system in the event that he tried to flee Alabama.

The case has been investigated for months. Karen Shahan was found stabbed to death in the couple's home in Alabama on July 23. While Richard Shahan was initially interviewed by police after the murder, [WTVF-TV reported](#) that he was eventually released.

But authorities now say that inconsistencies in the case caused new questions and led to an arrest warrant being issued earlier this week. While investigators have established motive, it has not yet been shared publicly.

"It will become readily apparent as we move into the trial process," Homewood police Chief Jim Roberson said during a press conference Thursday, according to [The Birmingham News](#).

He continued, "There are very few new details of which we can go into great elaboration because it is an ongoing investigation."

While authorities have said the incident shows Shahan was a flight risk, his attorneys Wendell Sheffield and John Lentine have said that this isn't an accurate portrayal and that the pastor had announced months ago that he was going on a missions trip.



Shahan's mugshot (Credit: Nashville Police Department)

“Some of the inferences that were put out there in the news conference made it sound like Richard was trying to leave the country and never come back,” [Lentine said](#) of the situation. “Anybody who’s been keeping up with this knows that Richard had announced months ago that he was planning on going on another mission trip like he did in 2012.”

Shahan [was a pastor](#) at First Baptist Church of Birmingham until he resigned on Dec. 31, the day the new arrest warrant was issued.

“All of us were saddened by the unexpected news that Richard Shahan was arrested by Homeland Security just moments before his planned flight departure for Frankfurt, Germany. There, he was to assume his new role working with the Children’s ministry of Bible Mission International, primarily in Kazakhstan,” [read a statement](#) on the church’s Facebook page.

[Post](#) by [First Baptist Church of Birmingham](#).

Shahan is now imprisoned without bond and could be extradited in the coming days back to Alabama, where a trial will take place.

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