



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 6, 2012

Zimmerman Bail Set at 1 Million, Death Threats Resume

The Florida judge overseeing the controversial case of George Zimmerman, accused of second-degree murder in the February shooting death of Trayvon Martin, reluctantly ruled that the defendant could be released on a \$1 million bond while awaiting trial — albeit with an array of new restrictions. As soon as the news broke Thursday, with Zimmerman still in jail trying to raise bail money, death threats against him resumed.



Zimmerman's previous bond, set at \$150,000, was [revoked last month](#) after Seminole County Circuit Judge Kenneth Lester agreed with prosecutors that the defendant and his wife Shellie had misled the court about their financial situation. According to the prosecution, the Zimmermans had raised well over \$100,000 from online donations, but failed to disclose that when questioned by the court at the previous bond hearing. They also allegedly spoke about the funds in "code."

Mrs. Zimmerman was [arrested in June and charged with perjury](#) — telling a deliberate lie while under oath. She was released on bail soon afterwards. Her husband, meanwhile, was ordered to surrender to authorities within 48 hours and has been in jail since then. But on July 5, the judge set his new bond at a significantly higher amount, noting that he was concerned Zimmerman may try to flee prosecution, but that not enough evidence had been presented to deny bail outright.

"Under any definition, the defendant has flaunted the system," judge Lester [said](#), accusing Zimmerman of attempting to "manipulate" the system whenever he had an opportunity to do so. "Although there is no record of flight to avoid prosecution, this court finds that circumstances indicate that the defendant was preparing to flee to avoid prosecution but such plans were thwarted."

Florida law requires that bail must be set at an amount that the defendant can actually pay. But analysts speculated that if the judge had more leeway in decision making, he might have denied Zimmerman's bond request altogether — especially because the court suggested it was highly suspicious about an undisclosed second passport and the hidden money potentially being used to flee the country.

Conditions of release are also far stricter than last time, when Zimmerman was allowed to leave Florida for safety reasons. In his latest ruling, the judge said that Zimmerman may not open a bank account, apply for a passport, enter an airport, or even leave Seminole County. He must also adhere to a curfew — 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., according to news reports about the decision.

Either way, raising the remaining \$85,000 to pay the rest of the typical 10 percent of a bond — not to mention finding \$1 million worth of collateral for the bond company — is going to be tough. The Zimmermans have already collected more than \$200,000 from supporters so far, but much of that is allocated to other expenses. So they are again appealing to donors for help in raising the funds.

"George Zimmerman and his family do not have anywhere near \$1,000,000 for collateral," said defense attorney Mark O'Mara in a [statement](#) online soliciting money and support, adding that his client was



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neither a threat to the community nor a flight risk. “For those who have given in the past, for those who have thought about giving ... now is the time to show your support.”

There may be other problems waiting for Zimmerman if he gets out, too. A report on the Twitter-centered news service *Twitchy*, which follows tweets and disseminates analysis, noted that despite the social-networking site’s clear rules, threats of violence against Zimmerman began to appear just moments after the bond request was granted.

“The Twitter lynch mob sprang into action immediately,” [noted](#) a July 5 *Twitchy* staff report about the threats. “At least two Twitter users threatened to murder Zimmerman.” Numerous other tweeters cited in the report encouraged violence or asked fellow users to kill the defendant instead.

“Imma bail George Zimmerman @\$\$ out Then kill his @\$\$ then get the money back somehow,” tweeted a user going by the screen name “MacAHoe.” Another Twitter user, “Millissa Hinton,” said this: “I need to take a trip to florida cause as soon as George Zimmerman get out again, ima be right thea to pop one off in em.”

A third tweeter encouraged the violence, responding with: “Empty the whole clip in his @\$\$!!!!” Similar tweets continued to appear throughout the day. More than a few commentators urged people to contact law enforcement and report the death threats, but analysts say Zimmerman still has good reason to fear for his safety — in or out of jail.

The media circus surrounding the case has indeed lessened in recent weeks, but Zimmerman remains in the spotlight nonetheless. Much of the attention generated so far was the result of race-profiteers who alleged there was a racial component to the shooting, as well as the fact that Zimmerman was not arrested or charged until weeks after the incident.

Often-biased and [sensationalistic press coverage](#) — which on numerous occasions painted a picture bearing little resemblance to reality — certainly contributed to the chaos, protests, and widespread attention, too. And political opportunists of various persuasions saw the case as a chance to advance their agendas.

Zimmerman, who was serving as the neighborhood watch captain at the time of the killing, maintains his innocence, arguing that he shot Martin in self-defense after being viciously attacked. According to legal analysts, a [great deal of evidence](#) including photographs, witness testimony, and medical reports would tend to support his claims.

For that reason and others, the prosecution has come under a barrage of fire by prominent critics and analysts. Most notably, perhaps, Harvard law Professor Alan Dershowitz has repeatedly and very publicly slammed Florida Special Prosecutor Angela Corey for alleged prosecutorial misconduct, saying that the charges against Zimmerman should have been dropped months ago.

“In her motion to revoke his bail, Corey argued that Zimmerman ‘intentionally deceived the court’ by making ‘false representations,’” [explained](#) Dershowitz in a scathing piece about the state attorney’s threats to sue him over the criticism. “The same can be said about prosecutor Corey. She too misled and deceived the court by submitting an affidavit that relied on a review of photographs and other reports that showed injuries to Zimmerman, without disclosing the existence of these highly relevant injuries.”

However, recent developments have led some analysts to speculate about the Zimmermans’ credibility with the court, which could be crucial in the defense’s efforts to have the case thrown out. An attorney



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for the Martin family, for example, has repeatedly seized on the alleged deception to attack the reliability of Zimmerman's testimony. Other legal analysts commented on the issue after the latest news as well.

"Mr. Zimmerman is not held in any high esteem by this court," law Professor Karin Moore with Florida A&M University, the nation's largest "historically black" college, told the Associated Press. "I think that could matter if there is a 'stand your ground' hearing ... It's a matter of credibility. There is no one else to testify to support the self-defense claim."

While the defense team and most observers expect Zimmerman to be out of jail on bond in the not-too-distant future, concerns about his safety and the possibility of finding an unbiased jury continue to be expressed. He is currently being held in solitary confinement at the county jail for his own protection.

Under Florida law, Zimmerman may ask the judge to review the case and decide on his own if the shooting was justified as self-defense before it actually goes to a jury trial. However, it remains unclear what exactly will happen next.

Zimmerman's wife, meanwhile, is still awaiting prosecution on the perjury charges. If convicted, she could spend years in jail or pay a hefty fine.

Late-breaking bulletin: Zimmerman was released from jail on \$1 million bond on July 6.

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Photo: In this June 29, 2012 file photo, George Zimmerman, left, and attorney Don West appear before Circuit Judge Kenneth R. Lester, Jr. during a bond hearing at the Seminole County

Criminal Justice Center in Sanford, Fla.: AP Images



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