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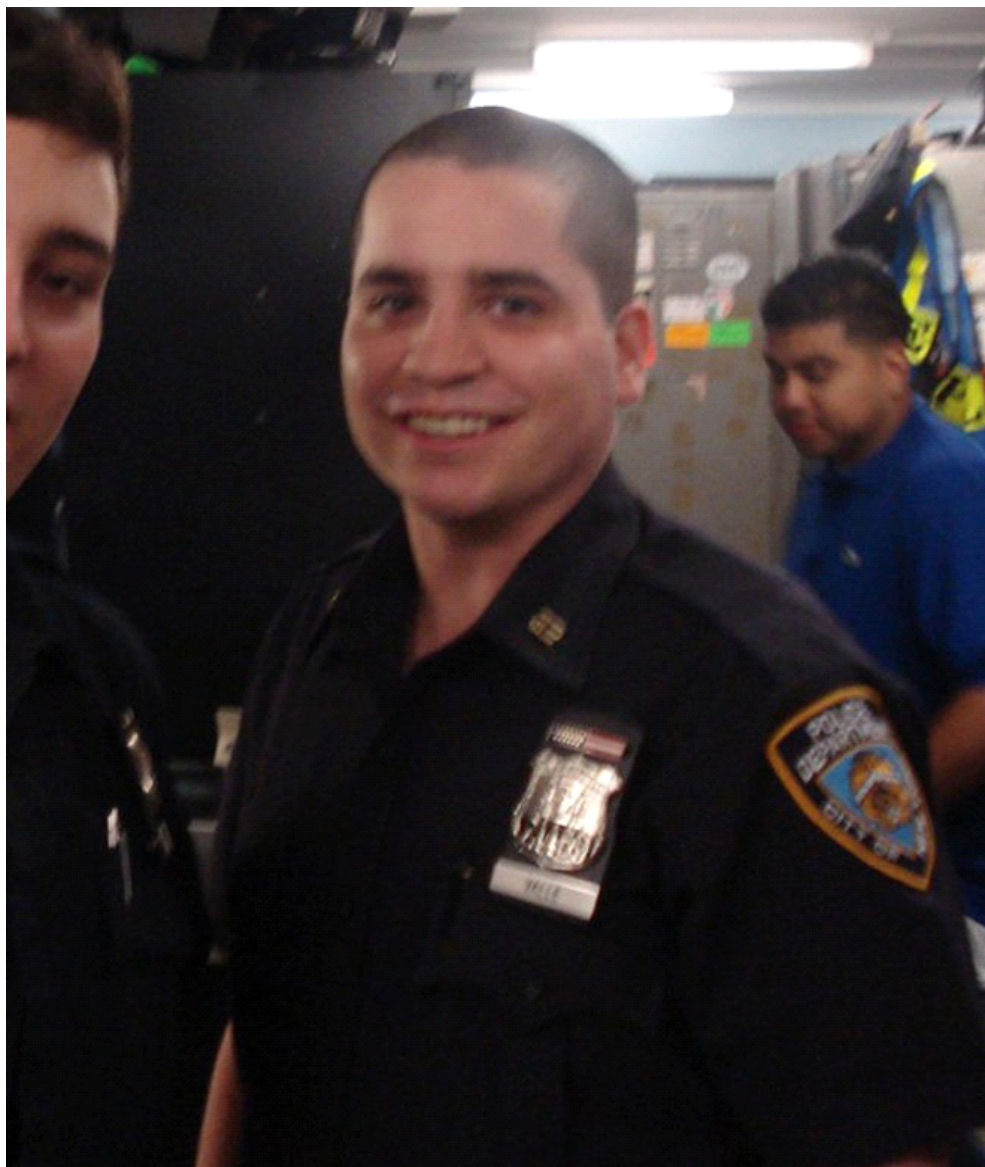
NOODSTUFF

'Cannibal Cop' had big plans in the kidnapping game

By ~~the~~ **the** ~~Bit~~ **Bit** Monday, October 29, 2012



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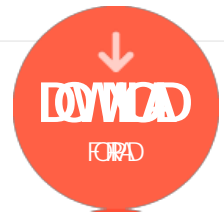


Gilberto Valle posted this photo on his OKCupid profile.

As a cannibal, Gilberto Valle seemed like a total amateur. But as a kidnapper, he had plans to turn pro.

"It is going to be hard to restrain myself when I knock her out," Valle wrote to one potential client, according to a transcript of intercepted computer messages filed this week in federal court in Manhattan. "But I am aspiring to be a professional kidnapper and that's business."

For a rising entrepreneur in a secretive industry, Valle, a 28-year-old police officer in New York, was off to a solid start. He drove a hard bargain. The price he demanded, \$5,000, seems to be the going rate, based on recent cases in Menlo Park, California and Fort Worth, Texas.



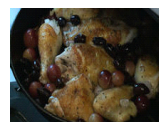
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Still, experts told The Daily, the professional kidnapping business can prove daunting for a freelancer, even a knowledgeable one making the transition from a law enforcement career.

First there is the matter of finding work.

“People advertising in newspapers et cetera is Hollywood,” said Orlando Wilson, a security consultant who specializes in kidnapping prevention. “Pros will not use people they do not trust unless they are going to kill them off anyway.”

And once on the job, things can get out of hand. Employers have passionate motives, whether political, familial or romantic. Desperate targets behave unpredictably. And a successful operation, of course, ends with all the potential witnesses walking away unharmed.

Then there is the matter of volume. The FBI does not even track kidnapping in its national database, specifically because the offense occurs “infrequently.”

“If you really are going to be a kidnapper for hire, my guess is that you’re not going to get all your business in the same neighborhood,” said Laurie Levenson, a criminal litigation expert at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. “You’re going to be exposing yourself in multiple jurisdictions.”

To mitigate the risks, most professional kidnapers align themselves with established street gangs, organized crime rings or drug cartels, experts said. Typically, hired kidnapers take a percentage of the ransom, which can range from several thousand dollars to half a million for a prominent victim. When things go wrong, though, the affiliation can turn unhelpful.

“For the professional working with the drug cartels, their main threat is getting killed,” Wilson said. “If they are lucky it will be quick, if they are unlucky, you can use your imagination.”

Despite the business conditions, potential clients seem to abound. Some go to great lengths to commission professional kidnappings. In 2010, for example, a woman in Oregon was charged with trying to hire a kidnapper on craigslist.

Adam Thick, the proprietor of Extreme Kidnapping, a Detroit company that offers simulated kidnappings as entertainment (ten hours for \$1,000), said he has been approached many times by people seeking the real thing.

“They’ve offered us money, or they’ll split the ransom with us, or ‘I know they have X amount of dollars, you can keep the money and give us the person,’” said Thick, who has been offered as little as \$2,000 and as much as \$20,000. He said he tells such solicitors, “I think you’ve got us confused with somebody else.”



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