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Michael Taylor, special forces op, undercover agent, and suburban football dad, is now a wanted man - The Boston Globe

Shirley Leung

6-7 minutes

From there, media reports indicate, Ghosn was whisked overnight onto another plane that , which took him to Lebanon, a country where the former businessman maintains citizenship and which does not extradite its citizens to Japan.

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Taylor did not immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment on Thursday.

Reached by phone Thursday, Steven J. Brooks, a Boston-area attorney who has represented Taylor in the past, said he was unaware of Taylor's whereabouts and, at this point, is not involved

in the current case.

“I can offer nothing to the process at this point in time,” he said. “I haven’t spoken to Michael in quite a while.”

The elder Taylor’s connection to the Hollywood-esque plot was first reported earlier this month by The Wall Street Journal, which described in detail the efforts of Taylor and Zayek.

Among the new details laid out by Japanese officials, however, is the alleged involvement of Taylor’s son, Peter, a former football player at Lawrence Academy who helped his father start a low-calorie sports drink company.

The Journal and The New York Times reported that prosecutors allege Peter Taylor had a significant role in the plot, having met with Ghosn on at least seven occasions in the preceding months, including on the day of the Dec. 29 escape.

Prosecutors believe the younger Taylor met Ghosn on the day before the escape and handed him a key to a hotel room.

On Thursday, the whereabouts of both Taylors remained unknown.

But with a now-real chance that Japan will seek extradition of the two, a return to the United States carries some risks for both Taylors. If Japan does seek extradition, the request could become an interesting test of the relationship between the two countries, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has more than most other world leaders

cultivated ties with President Trump. .

“Japan is a close ally, and this is a huge national embarrassment” for them,” said Joshua Levy, a former federal prosecutor who is now a partner at the Boston law firm Ropes & Gray. “So my guess is this is going to get more attention at the [Department of Justice] if there’s an extradition request than an average case.”

According to Boston-area defense attorney Martin Weinberg, who has handled a dozen or so extradition cases, Taylor’s fate could hinge on the particulars of the US-Japan extradition treaty.

To warrant extradition, Weinberg said, the alleged crimes in Japan must be the same as, or very similar to, crimes in the United States. Additionally, they must meet the requirements of the extradition treaty, as well as probable cause standards.

“I do think Taylor’s got a position, if Japan seeks his extradition and if the US arrests him on a warrant, to defend himself,” Weinberg said.

The Department of Justice, which handles international law enforcement matters for the federal government, did not respond to requests for comment on Thursday.

The Ghosn case is but the latest addition to Taylor’s incredible resume and string of adventures.

In the early 1980s, Taylor, an Ayer native, spent time in Lebanon as

a member of the US Special Forces, before leaving the Army with an honorable discharge in 1983 and going to work as a private securities contractor, the Globe recently reported, citing sources including court papers in an unrelated case. On various occasions, he was hired to help extract individuals from high-risk situations, including a young girl whose father had abducted her to Lebanon.

His undercover work with federal authorities was credited with once aiding in the seizure of \$100 million worth of hashish from an international drug ring based in Lebanon.

But trouble also seemed to follow him.

During his work as an undercover informant in the hashish case, Taylor caught the attention of a Massachusetts state trooper who believed Taylor was engaged in illegal activity outside the realm of the undercover case.

Taylor, who also worked as a private investigator, was eventually charged with several felony wiretapping and related charges stemming from the trooper's investigation. He pleaded guilty in 1999 to planting marijuana in the car of a client's estranged wife and persuading an officer to arrest her, according to a 2001 Boston Herald story.

In 2011, Taylor was investigated for allegedly paying kickbacks to obtain Department of Defense contracts in Afghanistan worth roughly \$54 million, according to court documents. After spending

14 months in a Utah jail, Taylor pleaded guilty to one count of violating the federal Procurement Integrity Act and one count of wire fraud.

Outside the shadowy world of his professional work, Taylor appeared to live a typical suburban existence. He played in a softball league and helped clear neighbors' driveways. For three years, he was head football coach at the posh Lawrence Academy in Groton — though that, too, would eventually result in controversy.

Shortly after his resignation in 2011, the Independent School League handed down various sanctions against the school, stripping it of two league titles won under Taylor. The academy's then-headmaster later acknowledged that several of its student athletes had been funded "beyond their demonstrated need."

In e-mails to the Globe earlier this month, Taylor declined to discuss any ongoing legal matters. At the time, Taylor said that he was traveling abroad but declined to say where. He did suggest, however, that his return to New England could be imminent.

In an e-mail to a Globe reporter on Jan. 9, he wrote: "I'll be glad to sit with you over a coffee and chat in the very near future."

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