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CHESHIRE, Conn. (July 25) - The two men accused of a brutal Connecticut home invasion may not have had violent crimes in their long lists of prior convictions, but sources tell local newspapers the pair's record changed when they invaded the home of a prominent doctor early Monday morning.



"This is everyone's worst nightmare," Lt. Jay Markella, Cheshire police spokesman, told the Waterbury newspaper. "It's by far the worst thing any of us have ever seen."

Joshua Komisarjevsky, 26, of Cheshire, and Steven Hayes, 44, of Winsted, were arraigned Tuesday on charges of assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, burglary, robbery, arson, larceny and risk of injury to children. More charges are pending, state police said Tuesday night. The two men could face the death penalty.



Prosecutor Michael Dearington said he had not yet decided whether to pursue the death penalty.

"I know the public consensus is they should be fried tomorrow," he said.

The state medical examiner confirmed that Jennifer Hawke-Petit, 48, was strangled and that her daughters, 17-year-old Hayley and 11-year-old Michaela, died of smoke inhalation. The deaths were ruled homicides.

The girls' father, Dr. William Petit Jr., a prominent endocrinologist, remained hospitalized with head injuries.

All three women were raped, sources familiar with the investigation told both the Waterbury Republican-American and Hartford Courant. Petit was beaten with a baseball bat, thrown down the basement stairs, and then tied up in the cellar.

The girls, sources told the Courant, were tied to their beds and raped repeatedly, then left to burn after gasoline was poured around their beds and ignited.

The suspects entered the Petits' Cheshire home at about 3 a.m. Monday, planning to burglarize it, state police said.

Sources familiar with the investigation tell the Republican-American that Hawke-Petit and Michaela were followed home from a supermarket Sunday by the suspects. The men then went to a Wal-Mart to buy an air rifle and a rope, and then waited about a mile-and-a-half away

State officials are re-examining their parole policies, but Robert Farr, chairman of the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Parole, said the task would be difficult because neither suspect had a history of violent crimes.

"That's why this is sort of shocking — because it doesn't fit a normal mode," Farr said.

Petit remained hospitalized Wednesday.

"He's doing OK physically. Emotionally he is devastated and still worried about others," said Petit's pastor, the Rev. Stephen Volpe.

He told CBS affiliate WFSB-TV the Pettits were a strong and giving family.

"I'm thinking of the father. I can't imagine what he has to come back to," neighbor Linda Layman told CBS News. "Nobody should have to go through that. It's very devastating. It's just horrible."

Employees at a bank called police after one of the suspects forced Hawke-Petit to make a \$15,000 withdrawal around 9:30 a.m., officials said. The employees balked, and Hawke-Petit told them her family was being held hostage, reports the Courant. One of the men was waiting for her outside the bank.

On the way back to the house, he bought a container of gasoline, according to the Republican-American.

The men were caught in the family's car after ramming several police cruisers as they fled the burning home, authorities said.

Hawke-Petit and her daughters were found dead inside. Dr. Petit escaped the blaze and told police what happened.

The suspects did not enter pleas Tuesday, and their public defenders declined comment. Bail was set at \$15 million apiece. Their next court appearance was scheduled for Aug. 7.

Family members became distraught during the hearing, and had to be escorted from the courtroom. As Hayes was led out, someone in the back exclaimed, "Scumbag!"

Hayes and Komisarjevsky each have more than 20 prior burglaries on their records. At the time of the killings, both were free on parole after serving prison time for burglary convictions in 2003, Bail Commissioner Garcia Harris said. They spent time last year in the same halfway house in Hartford before being paroled in the spring.

Prison officials said they reported each week to their parole officers and were employed full-time, a requirement of their release.

Farr said the parole board's staff scoured its files Tuesday to see if any mistakes were made and couldn't find any obvious problems.

"But three people died," Farr said. "We're not going to say, 'Those things happen.' We've got to see if there is anything we can do that would reduce the likelihood of this happening in the future."

In Connecticut, prisoners may be released from confinement and receive parole after serving more than half of their sentences.

Authorities have not said what they believe led Komisarjevsky and Hayes to the Petits' home.

The family issued a statement Tuesday through the hospital where the doctor was being treated.

"Our precious family members have been the victims of horrible, senseless, violent assaults. We are understandably in shock and overwhelmed with sadness as we attempt to gather together to support one another and recognize these wonderful, giving beautiful individuals, who have been so cruelly taken from us," the statement said.

Petit, president of the Hartford County Medical Association, is a specialist in diabetes and endocrinology and is the medical director of the Joslin Diabetes Center Affiliate at The Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain. Hawke-Petit, 48, was a nurse and co-director of the health center at Cheshire Academy, a private boarding school.

The attack stunned Cheshire, an upper-middle class community of 29,000 just east of Waterbury and about 15 miles north of New Haven.

Four bouquets of flowers and a single rose were left at the Pettit home Tuesday, reports WFSB.

Komisarjevsky lived less than two miles from the Petits' home, with his parents and a 5-year-old daughter. His family also released a statement Tuesday.

"This is an absolute tragedy. Our deepest sympathy goes out to the Petit family (and all those whose lives they touched). We cannot understand what would have made something like this happen. There is nothing else we can say at this time," the statement said.