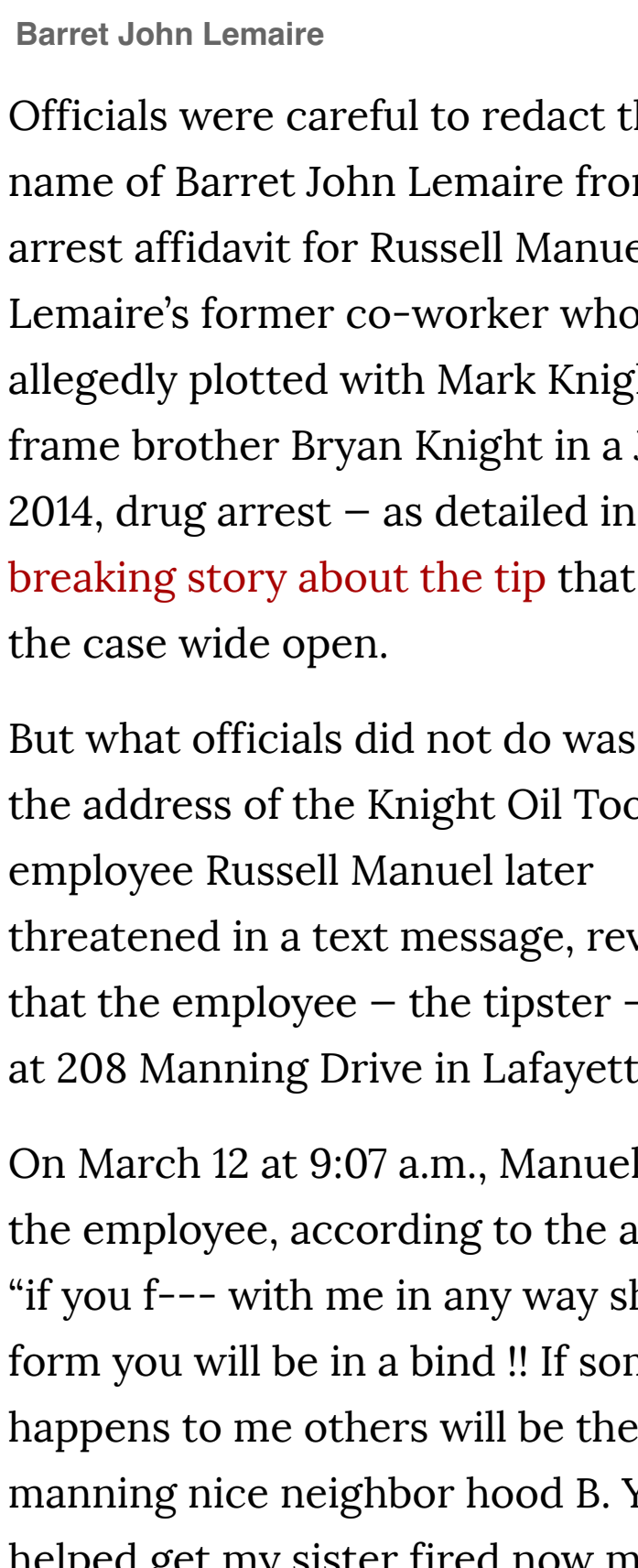


BUSINESS NEWS

April 20, 2015 05:35 PM

Tipster in Knight Oil Tools case revealed

BY **LESLIE TURK**



Barret John Lemaire

Officials were careful to redact the name of Barret John Lemaire from the arrest affidavit for Russell Manuel, Lemaire's former co-worker who allegedly plotted with Mark Knight to frame brother Bryan Knight in a June 4, 2014, drug arrest – as detailed in [this breaking story about the tip](#) that busted the case wide open.

But what officials did not do was redact the address of the Knight Oil Tools employee Russell Manuel later threatened in a text message, revealing that the employee – the tipster – lived at 208 Manning Drive in Lafayette.

On March 12 at 9:07 a.m., Manuel texted the employee, according to the affidavit: “if you f--- with me in any way shape or form you will be in a bind !! If something happens to me others will be there, 208 Manning nice neighbor hood B. You helped get my sister fired now me. Not nice.”

Records in the Lafayette Parish Tax Assessor's office confirm that the address belongs to Barret John Lemaire, whose LinkedIn page identifies him as working as director of information technology for Knight Oil Tools since June 2012.

Knight Oil Tools President and Chief Executive Officer Earl Blackwell, who replaced Mark Knight in December or January (the company did not confirm the change until January), confirmed to ABiz that Lemaire is still working for the oilfield service company.

Until ABiz's phone call, Blackwell says he was “not aware” that Lemaire is the unnamed employee who called in the tip and has been cooperating with law enforcement officials.

Blackwell says he has little knowledge of the case and was never interviewed by investigators because he was not employed by the company when the incident in question allegedly took place. He declined comment about whether this new information would have any impact on Lemaire's position with the company.

Lemaire's involvement leaves wide open the question about why he himself is not facing charges in the case. The arrest affidavit for Manuel clearly states that Lemaire at some point learned that Bryan Knight had allegedly been framed, but it appears that Lemaire did not immediately come forward. He did not tell authorities what he knew until he was threatened by Manuel to keep his mouth shut after Manuel was let go from the company in March of this year.

There is nothing in Manuel's arrest affidavit to suggest Lemaire had knowledge of the alleged plan before Bryan Knight's arrest. But Lemaire did learn that tracking devices he helped secure were placed on Bryan Knight's vehicle. He had also purchased, at Manuel's request, the type of magnetic cases that were found underneath Bryan's vehicle that contained illegal drugs.

And Lemaire did learn on June 4, 2014, that what Manuel had only been referring to as “the operation” had been successful. At that time, Lemaire was instructed by Manuel to delete all of the information on the tracking devices Lemaire had ordered and to ask the tracking company to delete all of its records as well.

Lemaire later learned (the affidavit does not say when) that Bryan Knight had been arrested on June 4 for drugs found in cases underneath his vehicle that were similar to the ones he had purchased at the request of Manuel – who made it clear to Lemaire that Mark Knight allegedly wanted the tracking devices and cases.

Surely Lemaire, an IT professional, could put two and two together. Or maybe he couldn't.

ABiz left a voice message for Lemaire at Knight Oil Tools; shortly thereafter, a person identifying himself as Barret in a text message asked ABiz to use discretion in reporting the case and to remove identifiable information, “particularly the address,” from its earlier story. “Other than that, I do not have any comment,” he writes.

He did not respond to a text message asking him about the delay in reporting the alleged scheme to law enforcement officials.

Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Captain Kip Judice, who is heading the investigation of the alleged conspiracy involving Mark Knight, Manuel and two law enforcement officials, would not say how long the unnamed employee knew of the alleged setup of Bryan Knight in 2014 before calling in the tip on March 9.

Judice (who is in the process of handing off the investigation to a secondary investigator who has worked with him because Judice is taking over as Duson police chief May 1) declined comment on this issue, he says, “to protect the integrity of the case.”

“The public will get it, I promise you,” Judice tells ABiz.

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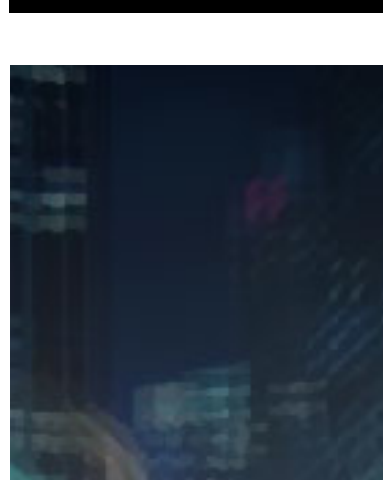
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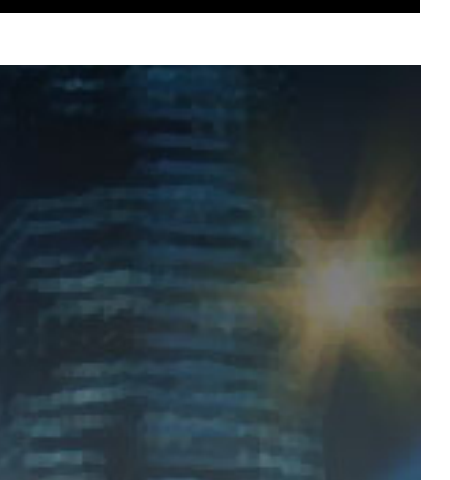
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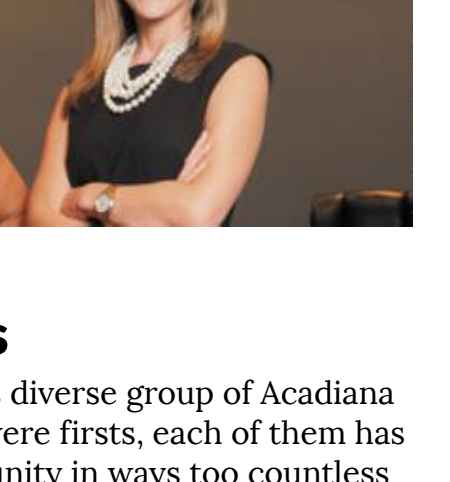


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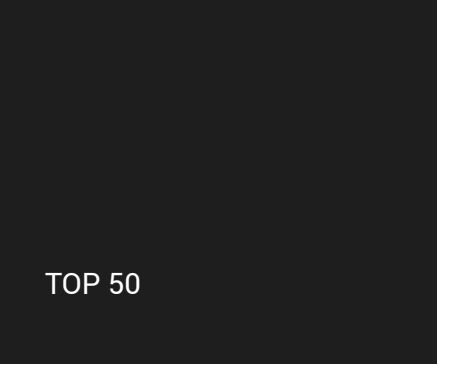
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