

# Suspect seeks to suppress evidence in case of slain cabdriver



Christian County Sheriff's Office

Donnella Hamilton

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TAYLORVILLE — The attorney for a Springfield woman accused of first-degree murder in the shooting death of cabdriver Steven L. Brummett has asked the court to suppress evidence he says was obtained by Springfield police through illegal eavesdropping.

Donnella Hamilton, 27, is one of three people indicted by a Christian County grand jury in the July 25, 2009, slaying of the Lincoln Checker Cab driver.

Brummett, of Loami, was shot in the back of the head at a vacant farmhouse about a quarter-mile inside the Christian County line near Pawnee. His body was found about 10:45 a.m.

Brandon L. Allsup, 27, also of Springfield, admitted in January that he shot Brummett and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Another woman, Ashley N. Davis, 21, of Springfield, pleaded guilty to concealing Brummett's death and is serving a five-year prison sentence.

Springfield attorney Mark Wykoff filed a motion in Christian County Circuit Court Tuesday alleging that police investigators violated the Illinois eavesdropping statute in tracking the whereabouts of Hamilton and the two others.

They were arrested the morning of July 26 in Forest Park in St. Louis. Wykoff's motion asks the court to

suppress the evidence obtained by tracking the “ping” from Hamilton’s cell phone and text messages to a friend in Springfield. The friend was cooperating with police and therefore should be considered “a state actor,” Wykoff said in his motion.

It further asks that any derivative evidence stemming from the tracking be suppressed, therefore quashing Hamilton’s arrest.

He argues that no judicial supervision for the use of eavesdropping devices was ever applied for, and that the application for an order seeking information from Hamilton’s cell phone account wasn’t sought until July 29, 2009.

Circuit Judge Ronald Spears set June 14 for a hearing on Wykoff’s motion and continued Hamilton’s jury trial until July 26.

Brummett was last seen the evening of July 24, 2009, at The Cove, a bar at 1616 N. Dirksen Parkway. He picked up Hamilton, Allsup and Davis there and agreed to take them to the Christian County residence for \$45.

The three had hoped to find a ride to a music concert in rural Missouri, but when that failed, Allsup suggested taking a cab to a farm where he had worked early in the summer and where he believed the owner kept a spare vehicle.

There he shot and robbed Brummett.

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