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## FDLE finds no evidence of murder

 By MATTHEW DOIG  
[matthew.doig@heraldtribune.com](mailto:matthew.doig@heraldtribune.com)

A Florida Department of Law Enforcement review into a Sarasota retiree's death ended with no new evidence to support claims by the man's son that his father was murdered.

Gov. Jeb Bush had asked FDLE to take another look at Murray Cohen's Jan. 13, 2003, death following a Sarasota Herald-Tribune investigation that raised new questions about whether Cohen was in fact dead when his wife called 911.

But FDLE's report, which details the agency's four-month investigation, does not put to rest some of the issues that prompted the review in the first place.

FDLE agents did not interview Maria Cohen, Cohen's new bride at the time of his death, or determine why Corazol -- an unusual and potentially fatal drug -- was found in the home after Cohen died.

Cohen's son, Steve Esdale, has accused Maria Cohen of poisoning his father as part of a scheme to inherit his million-dollar estate.

When he was reached for comment Wednesday, Esdale said FDLE did not conduct a complete investigation.

"Wouldn't it have been appropriate to interview her?" Esdale asked. "They didn't look into any of that. This report really doesn't tell anything."

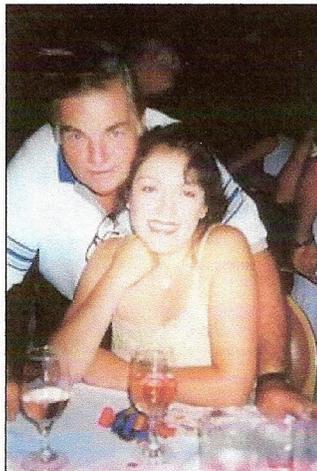
FDLE spokesman Larry Long said his office would not comment on the report, which he said is self-explanatory.

Most of FDLE's five-page report centers on Esdale's claims about suspicious noises and voices audible in the background of the taped 911 call Maria Cohen made the day her husband died.

FDLE agents interviewed the former 911 operator who took the call. According to the report, she said the noises probably originated from inside the 911 call center and were picked up by her microphone.

The 911 operator's statement conflicts with an analysis performed by Paul Ginsberg, a nationally recognized audio expert who was hired by the Herald-Tribune to analyze a copy of the 911 call.

Ginsberg said he could hear what seemed to be a conversation between



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COURTESY PHOTO

Murray and Maria Cohen are the focus of Murray Cohen's son, who claims that his father was killed by Maria Cohen -- Murray's new bride -- for money. An FDLE report says it found no new evidence in its investigation.

Update

**WHAT'S NEW:** The Florida Department of Law Enforcement on Wednesday released its findings on Murray Cohen's death and announced it had no proof the Sarasota man was murdered.

**THE STORY SO FAR:** Murray Cohen's son for years has been obsessed with trying to build a case that his father's newlywed wife murdered him in their Siesta Key home in 2003.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** The Sarasota County medical examiner still is considering other tests that could show whether Cohen had a potentially deadly drug in his system the day he died.

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Maria Cohen and a man in the room with her. However, the only man who was supposed to be in the house at the time was her husband, and Maria Cohen had already told the 911 operator that Murray Cohen was not breathing and "totally gone."

Ginsberg also said that the background noises appeared to come from Maria Cohen's telephone, not the 911 call center.

Ginsberg told the Herald-Tribune Wednesday that he was not questioned in any detail by FDLE agents about his findings.

"They just asked me if I had a

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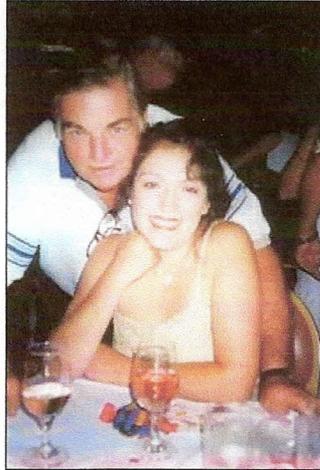
... ad a written report," said Ginsberg, president of Professional Audio Laboratories in New Jersey.

Esdale has said that his father's death is actually part of a broad conspiracy involving the FBI, the Sarasota Sheriff's Office and the Herald-Tribune. He has recently threatened to file lawsuits against the newspaper, saying it is participating in the cover-up.

He said he hopes Gov. Bush will "see through" the FDLE report and demand a legitimate investigation.

Spokesmen for Bush and Sarasota Sheriff Bill Balkwill said Wednesday they had not seen the report yet and could not comment. Maria Cohen, and her attorney, did not return calls seeking comment.

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