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Disbarred lawyer will stay in jail

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Of The Gazette Staff

A disbarred lawyer formerly from Sidney who was charged with an adoption scam pleaded not guilty Friday in federal court to new charges that he obstructed justice by threatening to kill his federal defender and threatened others by telephone.

Appearing before U.S. Magistrate Richard Anderson, James D. Alexander, 47, of Lexington, Okla., pleaded not guilty to a nine-count grand jury indictment filed Tuesday. Anderson ordered Alexander detained without bond until a Sept. 2 bond hearing.

Billings attorney Robert Kelleher Jr. has been appointed to represent Alexander.

According to the indictment, from Jan. 1 until June 4, Alexander attempted to obstruct justice by threatening to kill or injure Assistant Federal Defender Mark Werner unless Werner pursued a certain course of professional conduct. Werner was representing Alexander on federal charges stemming from what prosecutors alleged was an international adoption scam. The maximum penalty for obstruction is 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Alexander was released from custody on July 13, 1997, with conditions pending trial. Montana Supreme Court records indicated Alexander was disbarred in 1995 for complaints relating to the adoption business.

The indictment also charges eight counts of interstate communication of threats of violence. The maximum penalty is five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The counts allege that at various dates between January and June, Alexander, while in Lexington, used the telephone to communicate threats to injure individuals in Montana, including Werner, Rockwood Brown, Gary Ryder, Phillip Carter and Russ Curry.

U.S. Attorney Sherry Matteucci said the government this week filed a motion to dismiss the charges alleging an adoption scam because it feels federal interests would be satisfied by pursuing the latest grand jury indictment.

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