

Simpson

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"These are very serious charges," Galanter said. "He is taking it very seriously."

Security at the courthouse was tight during the period, everyone was searched by security officers and Las Vegas police, and bomb-sniffing dogs were employed.

Amidst the swarm of media personalities in covering the trial, was Marcia Clark, who unsuccessfully prosecuted Simpson for the 1994 murders and now reports for "Entertainment Tonight."

Authorities allege that the O.J. and other suspects went to the room on the pretext of brokering a deal with two longtime collectors, Alfred Beardsley and Bruce Fromong, who suffered a massive heart attack earlier this week after Simpson's arrest and who has since given live news interviews during his recuperation.

"Yes, there was a gun. It was right there in front of my face," Fromong said in a CNN interview last night. "O.J. never had a gun," he added. "O.J. never held a gun in his hand."

Fromong denies the items were stolen, though he did

say they were once the property of Simpson in that televised interview.

"What O.J. was looking for was not the items I had in that room," Fromong, of North Las Vegas, stated. He was referring, in particular, to personal photos and other non-sports-related items. Fromong said "I'm going to see this through."

He says that Simpson "went about it the wrong way." He added, "I hope that O.J. gets help."

Fromong places the blame on Riccio "who set this whole thing up."

According to police reports, the collectors were ordered at gunpoint to hand over several items valued at as much as \$100,000.

Beardsley told police that one of the men with Simpson brandished a pistol, frisked him and impersonated a police officer, and that another man pointed a gun at Fromong.

"I'm a cop and you're lucky this ain't LA or you'd be dead," the man said, according to the report.

"One of the thugs — that's the best thing I can call them — somebody blurted

out 'police!' and they came in military style," Beardsley said Wednesday on NBC's "Today" show. "I thought it might have been law enforcement or the FBI or something, because I was ordered to stand up, and I was frisked for weapons."

"At no time did Mr. Simpson hold any type of firearm at all," he said.

Beardsley also cast doubt on the authenticity of a recording of the confrontation made by Tom Riccio, the man who arranged the meeting between Simpson and the two collectors. Riccio reportedly sold that tape to celebrity gossip website TMZ.com.

"I do not believe that these tapes are accurate," Beardsley said. He said information was missing and the recordings should be professionally analyzed.

"Simpson confronted me, saying 'Man, what's wrong with you; you have a turnover order, you have a turnover order for this stuff, man,'" Beardsley said, but he said that part wasn't on the tapes.

In a surprising turn of events shortly after O.J. left

the courthouse preparing to leave town, the Fugitive Task Force of Las Vegas Metro arrested Beardsley pursuant to a California warrant for alleged probation violation. He is being held at the county detention center.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that court records show Riccio has an extensive criminal history of felony convictions from the 1980s and '90s, including grand larceny in Florida, possession of stolen goods in Connecticut and receiving stolen property in California. According to the newspaper, Riccio acknowledged his past in a telephone interview late Tuesday.

Riccio said he was not concerned with how his past might affect his credibility "because everything's on tape. That's why it's on tape."

Riccio also said he had been promised some form of immunity by prosecutors.

Legal commentators have expressed mixed opinions on whether the charges will hold up or whether the government will choose to go forward with charges with the conflicts.

"I think it's very possible

it could never see the inside of a courtroom," said Jami Floyd of Court TV in her comments on CNN.

The memorabilia taken from the hotel room included football game balls signed by Simpson, Joe Montana lithographs, baseballs autographed by Pete Rose and Duke Snider and framed awards and plaques, together valued at as much as \$100,000.

Two other defendants, Walter Alexander, 46, and Clarence Stewart, 53, were arrested and released pending court appearances. Stewart turned in some of the missing goods and Alexander agreed to cooperate with prosecutors, authorities said. He has appeared on televised interviews making statements regarding his relationship with Simpson and voicing opinions on Simpson's motivations and behavior, calling him "greedy."

Two suspects later surrendered — Michael McClinton, 49, and Charles Cashmore, 40. Police are seeking one more unnamed male suspect seen in hotel security images.

Although Simpson was

acquitted of murder charges in the deaths of his ex-wife and Goldman, a jury later held him liable for the killings in a wrongful death lawsuit and ordered him to pay a \$33.5 million civil judgment to Goldman's family.

On Tuesday, a California judge gave a lawyer for Goldman's father a week to deliver a list of items Simpson was accused of taking from the hotel room, raising the possibility that they could be sold to pay off the judgment.

"He's ordered to pay us millions of dollars," Goldman's sister, Kim Goldman said.

"If he went to Vegas to go collect on those things so we wouldn't, there's some irony in that."

She also said she felt some satisfaction with Simpson's arrest.

"I'm not going to lie to you, I do feel a little bit of elation to see him in handcuffs," she said.

"I hope that in some way the pressure that we put on him for the last 13 years drove him to this."

Parker Philpot contributed to this article.

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