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Charlemagnes Plead Not Guilty to Federal Fraud Charges in Hurricane Relief Case

Couple accused of exploiting hurricane recovery funds plead not guilty; trial set for August 5 following two-year federal investigation

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Tsehai Alfred **June 20, 2024**

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Davidson Charlemagne, left, with legal counsel David J. Cattie, at the V.I. District Court on St. Croix on Thursday, June 20, 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Davidson Charlemagne and wife, Sasha Charlemagne, were arraigned on Thursday at the District Court of the Virgin Islands on St. Croix. They both pleaded not guilty to federal charges of conspiracy to defraud taxpayers of \$4 million through exploitation of hurricane recovery funds.

A week ago, United States Attorney Delia L. Smith [announced the arrests](#), which stemmed from a two-year federal investigation into a V.I. Housing Finance Authority contract for the storage and management of wood brought to the territory as disaster relief, earmarked for the reconstruction of buildings damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.



Federally-purchased lumber which had been placed at the back of the Sunshine Mall in Frederiksted, was relocated to the abandoned Alexander Henderson Elementary School (Credit: Tsehai Alfred, V.I. Consortium)

The investigation found that Mr. Charlemagne was allegedly profiting off the storage of the wood as his company, D&S Trucking, would collect vastly inflated annual fees for the work. However, at the same time, the wood was being stored rent-free at the disused Alexander Henderson Elementary School, property of the Department of Education, where Mr. Charlemagne was employed.



Sasha Charlemagne, right, appeared in court with a legal representative as her attorney was not present. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Judge Emile A. Henderson III oversaw the arraignment hearing. David Charlemagne's attorney, Attorney David J. Cattie, as well as Sasha Charlemagne's legal representative—as her attorney was not present—requested a speedy trial, which Judge Henderson granted. Counsel for the United States government asked that the discovery period be continued until July 12, a request which was also granted by Judge Henderson. The judge scheduled a pre-trial conference for July 15, with the motion deadline set for July 24.

Both defendants are expected to appear for trial, currently scheduled to begin on August 5.

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