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Woodpile Scandal: New Charges Threaten Defendants with Over 100 Years in Combined Sentences

Sasha Charlemagne faces up to 45 years, Darin Richardson up to 71 years for fraud, money laundering, and false statements. All defendants pleaded not guilty, requested a speedy trial by jury, and are set for trial on Feb. 18, 2025.

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Sasha Charlemagne and her husband, Davidson, leaving the court house Thursday morning following their arraignment hearing. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Darin Richardson and Sasha and Davidson Charlemagne — defendants in what has come to be known as the woodpile scandal — faced arraignment on Thursday before St. Croix District Court Magistrate Judge Emile Henderson, as the federal government introduced a superseding

indictment with several new charges.

A superseding indictment is a formal legal document that replaces an earlier indictment, often expanding the scope of the charges or including additional defendants and allegations. This move hints to the evolving nature of the investigation into the woodpile scandal. By adding these new charges, prosecutors are indicating that further evidence has been uncovered, warranting a broader set of accusations against the defendants.

While Davidson Charlemagne did not face new allegations, his wife Sasha and Mr. Richardson learned that the new charges carry decades of imprisonment, highlighting the far-reaching implications of the indictment.

All three defendants pleaded not guilty and have requested a speedy trial by jury. The trial date has been set for February 18, 2025. Darin Richardson, represented by Attorney Darren John-Baptiste, now faces additional charges including money laundering, which carries a sentence of up to 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. He is also charged with criminal conflict of interest, punishable by up to one year behind bars, and bank fraud, which carries a maximum penalty of 30 years imprisonment and a \$1 million fine. Another charge, making a false statement related to loan, credit, or financial applications, also carries a penalty of up to 30 years and a \$1 million fine.

In response to the superseding indictment, Mr. John-Baptiste filed a motion Thursday morning seeking to have the new charges dismissed.

Sasha Charlemagne, represented by Attorney Pamela Colon, faces additional charges of making a false claim, which carries a sentence of up to 5 years and a \$250,000 fine. She is also charged with money laundering conspiracy, punishable by a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Additionally, she faces wire fraud, which typically carries a sentence of up to 20 years; however, since the allegations involve federal disaster-related funds, the penalty could extend to 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine.

During the arraignment, attorneys for Sasha Charlemagne and Mr. Richardson objected to the federal government's approach, arguing it would be highly prejudicial for their clients to prepare for the upcoming trial based on multiple ongoing indictments. However, the federal government clarified that they would consider only the superseding indictment as the operative document.

Additionally, the defendants sought to proceed with the case as severed matters to be tried separately — one involving the Charlemagnes, and the other involving Mr. Richardson — [as established by the court in September](#). There was some confusion regarding the government's intent with the superseding indictment, but it was clarified that the matters would indeed be tried separately.

For its part, the federal government stated it will be prepared for the February 18, 2025 trial, with discovery for the new charges being distributed this week.

The charges were first unveiled on June 13, when the federal government [accused](#) the defendants of exploiting the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's disaster relief efforts by allegedly orchestrating a fraudulent scheme to siphon off millions intended for hurricane recovery in the U.S. Virgin Islands.