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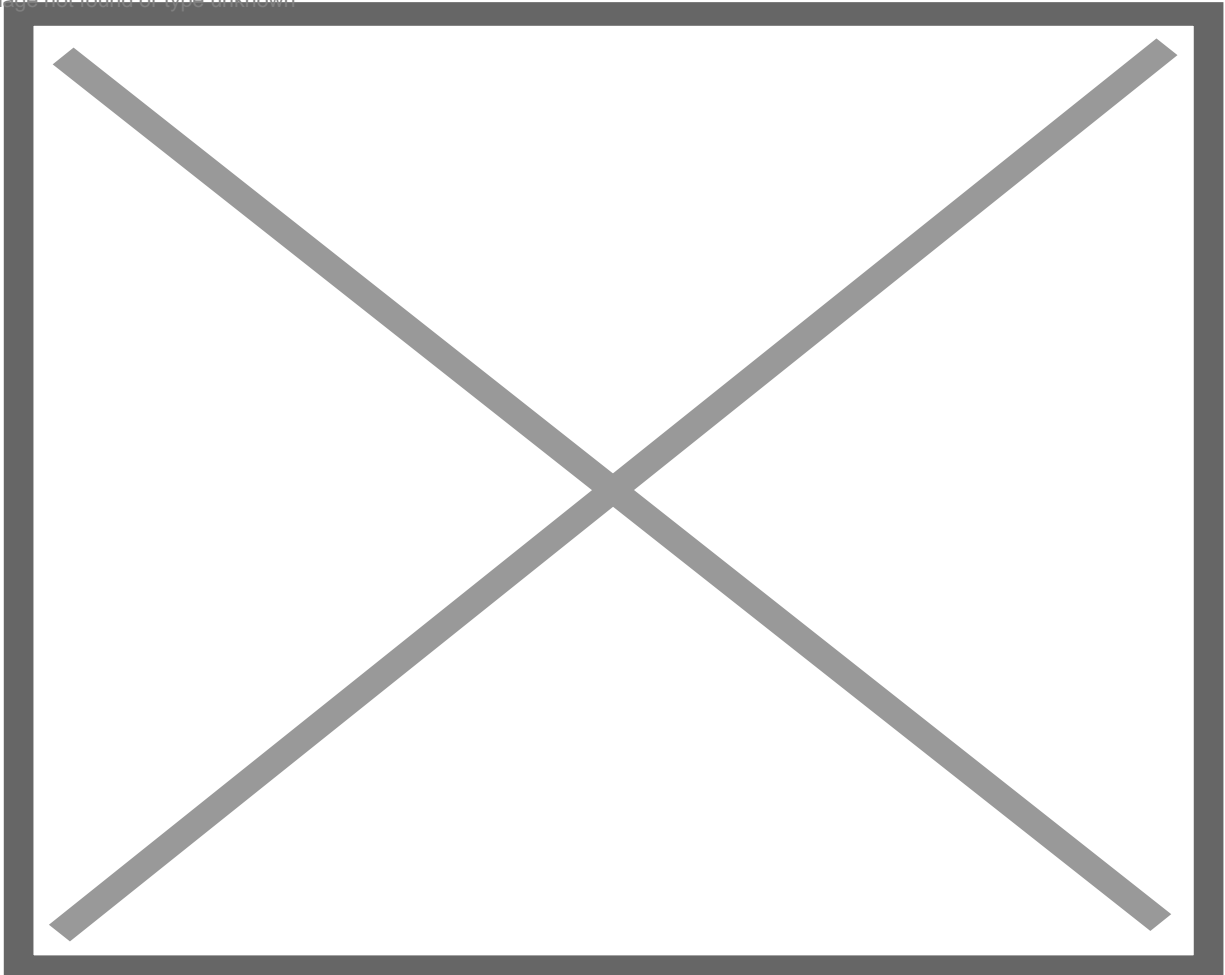
Feds File Motion to Stay Proceedings Filed in VIPD Detective Murder Case Amid Death Penalty Reinstatement

The U.S. government has filed a motion to stay proceedings in the case of Richardson Dangleben Jr., accused of murdering VIPD Detective Delberth Phipps, while determining whether to pursue capital punishment under Trump's reinstated federal death penalty.

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Ernice Gilbert **February 13, 2025**

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Mugshot of Richardson Dangleben Jr. By. THE V.I. POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — Federal prosecutors have filed a motion to stay proceedings in the case of Richardson Dangleben Jr., who is accused of murdering V.I. Police Department Detective Delberth Phipps [on July 4, 2023](#). The request comes as a result of President Donald Trump's

reinstatement of the federal death penalty, which directly impacts the potential sentencing in this case.

Dangleben was indicted [by a federal grand jury in October 2023](#), on 13 federal and territorial charges, including first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder, assault, and multiple firearm offenses. The indictment followed a violent confrontation in St. Thomas' Hospital Ground area, where Dangleben allegedly opened fire on Detective Phipps and VIPD Officer Shahim Skeete. The officers returned fire, but Detective Phipps sustained a fatal gunshot wound and was later pronounced dead at Schneider Regional Medical Center.

Authorities recovered an assault rifle covered in blood, along with two assault rifle magazines, seven boxes of ammunition, a loaded .45 caliber handgun with an obliterated serial number, and over 300 grams of marijuana from Dangleben's vehicle.

Dangleben, who has been detained in federal custody since his arrest, was already facing severe federal charges when President Trump [issued a memo reviving the federal death penalty](#). This policy shift prompted prosecutors to request a pause in legal proceedings while they determine whether to pursue capital punishment in the case.

In their [motion](#) to stay, federal prosecutors argue that proceeding without clarity on sentencing options could lead to unnecessary delays and potential legal challenges. The request is intended to allow the U.S. Department of Justice to assess whether Dangleben's case meets the threshold for capital punishment under the newly reinstated policy.

The revival of the federal death penalty marks a notable shift in U.S. Department of Justice policy and could have far-reaching implications for violent crime prosecutions, particularly in cases involving the murder of law enforcement officers. With Dangleben's case now subject to this policy, the prosecution is expected to review all aggravating factors before making a final determination.

Dangleben remains in federal detention as the court considers the motion.