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Accused Killers of Stacie Schjang and Arnold Jarvis May Go Free as DOJ Seeks Dismissal Without Prejudice

Citing insufficient evidence, the V.I. Department of Justice has moved to dismiss first-degree murder charges against Joshawn Ayala and Anthony Schneider, though the dismissal without prejudice leaves the door open for refiling.

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VIPD officers cordoned off the road separating Peter's Rest from Castle Coakley, following a shooting incident that occurred at about 7:45 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 27, 2022. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The accused murderers of Stacie Schjang and Arnold Jarvis, Jr. will likely walk free – for now – after government prosecutors asked the court to dismiss the charges against them.

On Wednesday, V.I. Department of Justice lawyers filed a motion to dismiss first-degree murder charges against Joshawn Ayala and Anthony Schneider, saying that the burden of proof cannot be met at this time. The request is for dismissal without prejudice, which would allow prosecutors to refile charges at some later date should they choose to do so.

Ms. Schjang was killed in January 2022 by a stray bullet [which entered her home and struck her](#). Mr. Jarvis was [shot dead about a week later](#) at Green Cay Beach.

In February 2023, Mr. Ayala and Mr. Schneider, maternal cousins, were arrested in Georgia by the Muscogee County Sheriff's Office Drug, Gang and Fugitive Unit in coordination with the U.S. Marshals service on outstanding warrants from the USVI and Cobb County, Georgia. The duo was extradited back to the territory to be tried for Mr. Jarvis's and Ms. Schjang's murders.



V.I.P.D. officers investigate the scene of a homicide at Green Cay Beach on St. Croix on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. (Photo Credit: V.I. Consortium)

The case unfolded with the usual legal tussle between the prosecution and the defense over what evidence was admissible in court, and what was not. The identification of one of the defendants by a minor was ruled valid, for example.

Earlier this year, however, counsel for the defense asked that the court exclude statements made by Mr. Jarvis, who was the reported target of the gunfire that killed Ms. Schjang. He reportedly identified the defendants as those who had tried to kill him, but Mr. Ayala's attorney argued that his statements consisted of inadmissible hearsay. Prosecutors argued that his statements to police before his death should not be excluded just because he is now deceased, but Mr. Schneider's attorney agreed with counsel for his co-defendant, arguing that "no limiting instruction would possibly cure the prejudice that would result from the use of the testimony....Admission of the prejudicial testimony would so infect the entire trial that any resulting conviction would violate due process."

Without waiting for presiding judge Yvette Ross-Edwards to weigh in on the issue, VIDOJ lawyers decided to give up on their attempt to prosecute Mr. Schneider and Mr. Ayala for the time

being.

As of press time, Judge Ross-Edwards has not yet granted the motion to dismiss without prejudice, however the Consortium understands that an official order to dismiss the matter is almost a certainty in the coming days.

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