

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Attorney General Asks For \$1 Million Bail For Man Accused Of Murder

VIC News / **Published On August 22, 2016 09:42 PM /**

Staff **August 22, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- A man accused of murder remains behind bars unable to post a \$750,000 bail while a judge considers a defense motion for bail reduction and a prosecution motion for his recusal, the Virgin Islands Department of Justice announced this afternoon.

Jason Coulter, 32, above, is charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, two counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a murder, first-degree assault, two counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a first-degree assault, third-degree assault, two counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a third-degree assault and attempt to destroy evidence in connection with

the November 2014 death of his roommate, William Ray Bennett. Mr. Bennett, from Tennessee, worked as a traveling lab technician and at the time of his death, he was an employee of Schneider Hospital.

On Friday, Mr. Coulter, through his attorney, motioned V.I. Superior Court Judge James Carroll III to reduce his bail to two percent of the original amount and allow him to be released into the custody of three persons who are willing to act as third-party custodians, and to be placed under house arrest with electronic monitoring.

Assistant Attorney General Eugene Connor, Jr., vehemently opposed the defense motion and suggested an increase in bail.

"This individual is such a danger to the community, such a high flight risk that we're asking for \$1 million bail," Mr. Connor said. "He bludgeoned and stabbed someone to death; this is not shoplifting. He has no real ties to this community. He's lived in Hawaii and Florida. This was just another stop on his crime spree across the U.S. If you look at his NCIC record, he's been arrested in every place he's been."

Meanwhile, during the course of the hearing, Mr. Connor submitted an oral motion for Judge Carroll to recuse himself from the matter after the judge disclosed that he grew up with the father of one of Mr. Coulter's potential third-party custodians.

At the end of the hearing, Judge Carroll told the parties, "I'm reserving an opinion on this."

Prosecutors charge that Mr. Coulter clubbed and repeatedly stabbed Bennett to death inside the Sapphire Village apartment they both shared. The incident occurred sometime between Nov. 28 and 29, 2014. Mr. Coulter then left the island shortly after and was extradited to the territory almost a year later to face the charges.

According to an affidavit filed by Det. Dwight Griffith in support of the arrest warrant, one of Mr. Bennett's co-workers requested a welfare check on the 60-year-old man, which was prompted after she received two "out sick" calls on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 from Bennett's roommate, Mr. Coulter. Mr. Bennett was not heard from since.

A group from the hospital's security arrived at Mr. Bennett's residence on Dec. 2 and knocked on the door, but there was no answer, according to Griffith's affidavit. They then contacted the property manager, who let them into the apartment. Once inside, they noticed the scent of Clorox bleach, according to Griffith's affidavit. While walking around and inspecting the apartment, they saw sitting in a corner a sheet wrapped around a large object with trash bags heaped on top of it. One officer who touched the bag saw what appeared to be blood, according to Griffith.

Police were called to the scene after Bennett's body was discovered stuffed inside the garbage bags. At the scene, forensic detectives sprayed the apartment with luminal, which showed the presence of blood on the back wall behind the living room couch, on the living room couch and on a conch shell, according to Griffith's affidavit. Investigators also spoke to several persons who knew both Mr. Bennett and Mr. Coulter. Based on witnesses' statements and other evidence collected at the scene, there was probable cause to arrest Mr. Coulter, who had left the island on Dec. 2, according to Griffith's affidavit.

Having secured an arrest warrant, the Orange County Sheriff's Office in Florida arrested Coulter on July 5, 2015, in connection with the crime. Then, on Nov. 12, 2015, agents from the V.I. Police Department traveled to Orlando, Florida, to return Coulter to the territory. Coulter refused to waive extradition and voluntarily returned to the Virgin Islands, where he was formally arrested and charged, according to court documents.

© Viconsortium 2026