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Florida Dentist Shot in Back Six Times by two U.S. Virgin Islands Men, Police Say; Suspects Captured Attempting to Board One-Way Flight to Territory

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Ralph Benjamin, left, and Hector Ledesma, right. Both men have been charged with attempted, premeditated murder. By. Hialeah Police Department

A Florida dentist was shot six times from the back on Friday outside her Hialeah, Florida office by two men from the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to the Hialeah Police Department. The men were arrested in the Miami International Airport attempting to board a one-way flight back to the territory, police said. The victim sustained injuries in her face, neck and chest, and was in critical condition late Friday at the Jackson Memorial Hospital, with a bullet lodged near her heart, according to police.

The suspects have been identified as Hector Ledesma and Ralph Benjamin, 39, the latter who police believe was flown into Florida for the sole purpose of hunting down and killing the dentist. Mr. Ledesma was living in Florida, but is from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to police, the dentist, who was identified as Dr. Carmen Ramirez, 59, was walking to her office on East Eighth Avenue and 41st Street Tuesday about 10:00 a.m., when she was shot. The suspects fired 12 shots, with six hitting the victim, police said.

In October, 2018, Mr. Ledesma's cousin, Cydmarie Cruz, [submitted an article to The Consortium](#) on Mr. Ledesma's behalf, who was once incarcerated at the infamous Virginia Red Onion Super Max Prison. The article detailed alleged abuse that Mr. Ledesma, who had been incarcerated for 13 years and 9 months, endured. Mr. Ledesma was serving time after being convicted of rape in the territory.

Mr. Benjamin has an open case in the U.S. Virgin Islands for possession of a firearm by a felon.

According to police, Ms. Ramirez is the star witness in an identity fraud case out of Orlando, where a man is accused of stealing \$40,000 from her business. The fraud suspect is facing 3-5 years in prison, and after an investigation, police found out that the man, identified as José Ledesma, is the brother of Hector Ledesma.

Police reviewed several surveillance videos to identify Hector and Mr. Benjamin. “This is a targeted shooting,” Hialeah Police Maj. Hubert Ruiz said. “Our victim has been victimized by the same group of people in increasing fashion over the past couple of years. Everything we’ve learned about this case indicates that it was an assassination attempt.”

Police revealed that Mr. Benjamin pulled the trigger, while Hector drove the getaway vehicle.

“Benjamin was flown into Florida for the sole purpose of hunting down and killing our victim, and we also believe Ledesma’s relationship to his brother, who faces jail time, leads us to our motive,” Mr. Ruiz said. “They have been identified via CCTV footage, independent witness accounts and photo lineups.”

Surveillance videos also captured the suspects visiting the area to become familiar with the dentist's whereabouts a day before committing the crime, police said.

With the victim in an induced coma and in critical condition, Mr. Ruiz acknowledged the possibility of the star witness of the case no longer being available to testify. “Just hours away — or really a plane ride away — from this becoming a cold case,” Mr. Ruiz said.

Both men are charged with attempted, premeditated murder. No bail was granted.