

Tucson Crime Spree Suspect Pleads Not Guilty

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TUCSON, Ariz, Julio Cesar Aguirre, a previously deported felon, pleaded not guilty Friday in federal court to charges stemming from a crime spree in Tucson's southside last month. Aguirre faces five federal counts, including two related to the death of Ricky Miller.

Aguirre's schedule for state court proceedings remains uncertain, as Pima County Attorney Laura Conover is seeking access to him for separate legal action. Conover filed a lawsuit on Friday to ensure her office can depose Aguirre and other witnesses.

Aguirre, a Mexican national, waived his personal appearance at the federal arraignment. His lead attorney, federal public defender Leo Masursky, represented him during the hearing. Representatives from the Mexican consulate were also present.

Conover said the county's legal action aims to preserve testimony for multiple victims involved in Aguirre's alleged crimes. "We have two victims who are 76 and 78 years old. We need to record and preserve their testimony for later use," she explained.

In Pima County Superior Court, Aguirre faces 12 charges, including first-degree murder for Miller's death and six counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Some charges involve victims whose depositions Conover is seeking in advance of trial.

Defense attorney Louis Fidel, who is experienced in cases involving concurrent federal and state charges, described the situation as uncommon but not unprecedented. "Most people aren't getting in trouble in both places, but it's certainly not unheard of," he said.

Fidel also addressed the county attorney's lawsuit, which alleges federal prosecutors denied state officials access to Aguirre over concerns that it could compromise both cases. "You have to assume that if a prosecuting agency is going to make a statement like that, they have some reason," Fidel said. "It does seem a little strange that the reasoning is not being communicated to the state prosecutor level."

The U.S. Attorney's Office confirmed that Aguirre's federal case is part of "Operation Take Back America," a Justice Department initiative aimed at enforcing federal immigration laws.

Aguirre's federal trial is scheduled to begin at the end of next month. The timeline for his state trial remains unclear as courts address Conover's request for access to the defendant and the preparation of witness testimonies.

Authorities emphasize that the separate legal proceedings ensure due process for all victims while maintaining the integrity of concurrent federal and state cases.