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Two Men Charged in Shooting Death of Kristina Ortiz at South Bend Park

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— Categories: *Crime*



Facing murder and related charges, two men have now been linked to the June 7 killing of 37-year-old Kristina Ortiz, who was gunned down in front of her child during a visit to Southeast Park in South Bend, Indiana. Prosecutors say Ortiz had no connection to the suspects and was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

According to the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office, Jalil Aaron Wills has been charged with murder and criminal recklessness, while Nicholas Fairchild is charged with assisting a

criminal. Prosecutors stressed the tragic nature of the shooting, which took place in broad daylight at a public park filled with families.

“This was a family that was at a park with their child,” said County Prosecutor Ken Cotter. “There were other families who were at the park with their children. This was not one of those nighttime 2 o’clock in the morning parties.”

Surveillance Evidence

Police responded to the 500 block of Wenger Street after reports of gunfire. When officers arrived, they found Ortiz with a gunshot wound to the head. She died at the scene.

Witnesses reported seeing a dark blue vehicle pull into a nearby apartment complex. A person exited the passenger side, walked toward the park, and minutes later, gunshots rang out. That same individual was then seen running back to the car before it sped off.

Investigators used surveillance footage from several locations to trace the suspect vehicle. The car was caught on camera in the area before and after the shooting, including footage from University Park Mall earlier that day. Both Wills and Fairchild were identified in the mall’s surveillance videos, with Wills seen riding in the vehicle’s passenger seat, believed to be used in the crime.

Amy Cressy, Chief Deputy Prosecutor for St. Joseph County, highlighted the role of video evidence in solving the case. “I encourage anyone in the community who has video surveillance capabilities to please contact the South Bend Police Department and become a part of this team,” Cressy urged during a press briefing.

Investigators noted that Wills’ clothing in the footage matched descriptions from witnesses at the scene. A deeper look into Wills’ online activity also proved critical. A search warrant served on his Instagram account uncovered voice messages he allegedly sent on June 10. In them, he admitted to firing a Glock 19 Gen 5 pistol and said he hit a woman in the head. He also said he needed to “trade” the gun because it was “dirty,” and claimed it was buried in a backyard.

A follow-up search at a home connected to Fairchild led officers to a shovel near a freshly dug hole, though the weapon was not found. However, shell casings recovered from the scene were analyzed by the South Bend Police Department’s Ballistics Laboratory and

confirmed to have been fired from a Glock 9mm Gen 5. Those casings matched others linked to previous incidents involving both Wills and Fairchild.

At the time of the new charges, both suspects were already in custody at the St. Joseph County Jail. Wills was facing separate charges filed on June 14 for battery with a deadly weapon and multiple counts of criminal recklessness involving firearms.

The investigation remains ongoing, with law enforcement urging anyone with information or additional footage to come forward.