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TWO MEN INDICTED FOR MURDERING MOTORIST WITH HIS OWN VEHICLE

Face Up to 25 Years to Life in Prison

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Aaron Mayers and Zahir Williams were indicted in connection with the murder of a Brooklyn man who was pummeled unconscious before being run over with his own car. According to the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, 50-year-old Francisco Ortega survived a brutal beating by the defendants and two other attackers in Astoria, but was killed when Williams drove over the unconscious victim.

District Attorney Katz said: “An outnumbered victim was sucker-punched, viciously beaten unconscious and then mercilessly run over. We need to get people capable of such cold-blooded brutality off our streets as soon as possible.”

Williams, 24, of Beck Street in the Bronx, and Mayers, 25, of Pennsylvania, were jointly indicted on charges of murder in the second degree, gang assault in the first degree, two counts of robbery in the first degree, two counts of robbery in the second degree and robbery in the third-degree. Williams faces an additional count of murder in the second degree and criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree. Each faces up to 25 years to life in prison if convicted. Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder ordered them to return to court February 27, 2024.

According to the charges and video surveillance footage:

- On October 20, at approximately 3:30 a.m., Francisco Ortega of Brooklyn pulled a BMW sedan over in front of 40-06 Astoria Boulevard, near the intersection with Steinway Street. He got out of his car and spoke to Williams and Mayer who were among a group of people standing nearby. Ortega and Williams appeared to argue.
- Ortega drove away and returned. He got out of his car again to speak with Williams.
- As Ortega stood between the driver’s seat and open car door talking, one of the individuals in the group that was with Williams and Mayer sucker-punched him in the head from behind, causing him to fall to the ground.
- As Ortega lay on the ground, Mayers, Williams and two other individuals in the group repeatedly kicked and punched him.
- Williams then stepped over the unconscious Ortega and got into the driver’s seat of the victim’s BMW. Attempting to close the door, Williams repeatedly slammed Ortega’s head and body. Mayers then pulled Ortega’s body away from the side of the car toward the center of the road. Williams shut the car door and pulled away.
- Williams drove around the block. As he approached Ortega, who was still lying in the road unconscious, Williams slowed down, lined the car up with Ortega’s body and abruptly accelerated, driving over the victim.
- Williams dragged Ortega’s body for several feet before crashing into a parked car. He got out of the BMW and fled the scene on foot.
- Ortega was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead due to multiple blunt impact injuries. According to the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, he was alive when Williams drove over him.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Oliver Kim of the New York Police Department's 114th Precinct Detective Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Matthew Barber.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Ryan Nicolosi of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case, with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Antonio Vittiglio, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, Karen Ross, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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