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**COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEVE DESCANO ANNOUNCES
RICHARD MONTANO CONVICTED OF FIRST-DEGREE MURDER**

Fairfax County, VA — Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano announced today that a jury convicted Richard Montano, 48, of first-degree murder for the 2022 killing of Silvia "Kelly" Vaca Abacay, 40. The jury also found Montano guilty of arson of an occupied dwelling.

On the afternoon of August 10, 2022, Montano killed Silvia Vaca Abacay and set her body on fire to attempt to conceal the murder. Abacay was temporarily staying at the apartment of her friend, Fatima Via Rojas, who was Montano's ex-girlfriend.

Evidence presented at trial showed that Montano had entered the apartment that afternoon, likely intending to kill Via Rojas, after she had formally ended their eight-year relationship at the end of July. A neighbor's Ring camera footage showed that Montano had entered her apartment without her knowledge multiple times in the preceding month, with his last entry just 10 days before the murder occurred; the same neighbor called 911 four times that afternoon after hearing screaming and banging from across the hall. Medical examiners determined that Abacay died from multiple sharp- and blunt force wounds before her body was set on fire.

Abacay, a close friend of Via Rojas, was staying at the apartment temporarily, and prosecutors believed that she was likely mistaken for Via Rojas when she was killed.

"As Commonwealth's Attorney, I've seen considerable crime scenes and photos, but the photos from this case stood out in terms of the severity of the victim's injuries," CA Descano said. "Nothing can undo Silvia's death, but a conviction ensures that the defendant is no longer a danger to members of our community. I hope today's verdict provides the victim's family with the first step towards healing."

"I want to express my gratitude to Commonwealth's Attorneys Claiborne Richardson, Kaitlin Morgan, and Kennedy Nyhoff for their work on this case."

Montano faces up to life in prison for both charges and will be sentenced on Jan 19, 2024.

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