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CA DESCANO ANNOUNCES INDICTMENTS IN THREE HIGH-PROFILE MURDER CASES

Fairfax County, VA — Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano announced today that a grand jury has indicted defendants in three high-profile murder cases in Fairfax County: **Juliana Peres Magalhaes** for the 2023 killing of Joseph Ryan, **Jose Larazo Cruz** for the 1991 killing of Ana Jurado, and **Stephan Smerk** for the 1994 killing of Robin Lawrence.

Juliana Peres Magalhaes, 23, was indicted on charges of second-degree murder and use of a firearm in commission of a felony for the killing of Joseph Ryan, 38, on February 24, 2023. Peres Magalhaes, a live-in au pair from Brazil, was employed by a Herndon couple, Christine and Brendan Banfield, and is alleged to have shot Joseph Ryan at her employers' home. Mr. Ryan is not related to the family. Christine Banfield was also killed during the incident; charges have not yet been brought in relation to her death.

Jose Larazo Cruz, 60, was indicted on one charge of second-degree murder for the April 30, 1991, fatal stabbing of his wife, Ana Jurado, 24. While Larazo Cruz (who sometimes goes by Lazaro Cruz) was charged shortly after the incident, he left the United States before he could be arrested. More than 30 years later, he was detained while attempting to enter Costa Rica in July 2022 and was extradited back to the US in January 2024.

Stephan Smerk, 52, of Niskayuna, N.Y., was indicted on one charge of second-degree murder for the November 1994 fatal stabbing of Robin Lawrence. Police were originally unable to identify any suspects in Lawrence's killing, but recent investigatory work led them to Smerk, who was arrested in September 2023. Prosecutors allege that at the time of the murder, the victim was unknown to Smerk.

"I'm extremely proud of the work that Fairfax County investigators have done in these three cases," CA Descano said. "These indictments are evidence of Fairfax County's commitment to the pursuit of justice and our steadfast support to families of victims. No matter how long it takes, individuals who commit such violent acts in our county will be found and face accountability for their actions."

Trial dates for all three cases will be set on April 18.

A criminal indictment is an accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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