

Criminal Case Tracker Deep Dive

United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis

NATIONAL
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CRIMINAL
JUSTICE

Eleanor Heller
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United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis

In the now-dismissed case of *United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis*, federal officers sought to detain an immigrant during immigration enforcement activities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on January 14, 2026. According to an affidavit supporting a Criminal Complaint sworn by FBI Special Agent Timothy G. Schanz, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer Christian Castro and his partner identified a vehicle they had reason to suspect was operated by an undocumented individual and “attempt[ed] to pull the vehicle over.”¹ The driver declined to stop, instead “fle[ing] from [the enforcement officers] at a high rate of speed,” resulting in a vehicle chase. Agent Castro and his partner pursued the driver, who was later identified as Alfredo A. Aljorna, but “lost track of the exact location of the fleeing vehicle during the pursuit, until it hit a light pole.”² The driver then exited the vehicle and ran toward a nearby apartment complex.

According to the affidavit, Agent Castro exited his vehicle and “chased Mr. Aljorna on foot,” attempting to detain him on the front lawn of what was later determined to be his and Sosa-Celis’ residence.³ Mr. Aljorna “slipped and fell” while running on the ice in front of the apartment, allowing Agent Castro to reach him.⁴ Agent Castro then “attempted to detain [him] and began tussling with him on the ground.”⁵ According to the affidavit, Mr. Sosa-Celis had been standing on the porch of the residence watching the attempt to detain Aljorna and soon entered the fray wielding a snow shovel. It was alleged that Agent Castro’s altercation with Aljorna and Sosa-Celis lasted several minutes, during which time a third man appeared, and both Sosa-Celis and the third man took turns assaulting Castro with a broom and shovel before fleeing back into the residence.

According to the affidavit supporting the Criminal Complaint, Agent Castro fired multiple rounds from the ground “in the general direction” of the men as they ran into the house, with one round striking Sosa-Celis in the leg.⁶ In an official statement issued the day after the incident, then-acting

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem described Sosa-Celis’s actions as “attempted murder,” saying that, “fearing for his life, [Castro] fired a defensive shot.”

¹ [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

² [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

³ [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

⁴ [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

⁵ [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

⁶ [*United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis* - ECF 1](#)

The only fact that all parties agreed upon was that Mr. Sosa-Celis was shot in the leg as he pulled Mr. Aljorna through the doorway of the residence and shut the door.

Both Mr. Aljorna and Mr. Sosa-Celis were charged with felony assault for “aiding and abetting forcibly assaulting, resisting, opposing, impeding, intimidating, and interfering with a federal law enforcement officer and involving physical contact with the officer” under 18 U.S.C. § 111(a)(1). At a combined detention and preliminary hearing in which the government sought the detention of both defendants, an FBI agent who was not present at the incident testified to facts contained in the affidavit supporting the Criminal Complaint.

Magistrate Judge Micko ordered both defendants released on conditions, instead of granting the government’s request for detention.⁷ The government immediately appealed Magistrate Judge Micko’s order,⁸ and the defendants opposed the government’s appeal.⁹ The respective pleadings revealed a significant discrepancy about what occurred during Agent Castro’s attempt to arrest defendant Aljorna. According to both defendants’ accounts, Aljorna merely picked up a broom as he entered the residence and tossed it toward Agent Castro, and Sosa-Celis never used the snow shovel he was admittedly holding to strike at anyone. The only fact that all parties agreed upon was that Mr. Sosa-Celis was shot in the leg as he pulled Mr. Aljorna through the doorway of the residence and shut the door.

Two weeks after the defendants were released on conditions, the government moved to dismiss the case with prejudice, saying “[N]ewly discovered evidence in this matter is materially inconsistent with the allegations in the Complaint Affidavit, filed on January 16, 2026, as ECF 1-1, as well as the preliminary-hearing testimony¹⁰ that was based on information presented to the Affiant.” The Court then granted the motion.

Surveillance camera footage and other testimony revealed Castro had lied about his arrest of Aljorna and his shooting of Sosa-Celis.

On September 2, 2026, a federal grand jury indicted Agent Castro, charging him with “knowingly and willfully mak[ing] a materially false and fictitious statement and representation... to an agent of a federal law enforcement agency.” See *United States v.*

⁷ [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 18](#); [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 19](#)

⁸ [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 24](#)

⁹ [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 33](#); [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 34](#)

¹⁰ [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 18](#); [United States v. Aljorna and Sosa-Celis ECF 19](#)

Castro, No. 0:26-cr-00152-DWF-ECW.¹¹ Surveillance camera footage and other testimony revealed Castro had lied about his arrest of Aljorna and his shooting of Sosa-Celis when he described the incident to the FBI agent who filed the affidavit in the case. As the indictment reveals, Agent Castro was not lying on the ground when he discharged his weapon, his interaction with Aljorna and Sosa-Celis was much shorter than he had claimed, and “no third person was involved, and no person struck him with a snow shovel.”¹²

It is worth noting that Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Evans wrote an email to Sosa-Celis’s lawyers on September 1 describing the charges the DOJ intended to bring against Agent Castro. Evans implied that federal prosecutors had hoped to charge Castro with deprivation of rights under the “color of law,” 18 U.S.C. § 242—charges like those brought against Derek Chauvin and the officers convicted of killing George Floyd in 2020. Instead, Evans stated that the prosecution would press charges only for false statements, despite his “strongest possible” objections. According to Evans, the charges were reduced to comply with directives of “the Main Justice and the U.S. Attorney.” Evans has since been fired by the Department of Justice, according to CBS News and several sources familiar with the matter.

As of the date of this report, Agent Castro has pleaded not guilty to the federal charges. He has similarly pleaded not guilty to state-level charges filed by Hennepin County: four counts of second-degree assault and one count of falsely reporting a crime. The NACDL Criminal Case Tracker will update this report as circumstances warrant.

¹¹ *United States v. Castro* ECF 1

¹² *United States v. Castro* ECF 1

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

About this Project

Since January 2025, federal criminal law enforcement has undergone profound and rapid change. To help defense counsel navigate this evolving landscape, NACDL launched the NACDL Criminal Case Tracker, a curated resource designed to identify, follow, and analyze select federal prosecutions that depart from traditional enforcement norms.

The Criminal Case Tracker focuses on unusual, novel, or expansive applications of federal criminal law, distinguishing these cases from routine prosecutions that fall within long-standing enforcement patterns.

The Criminal Case Tracker is led by NACDL Member Steven M. Salky. The project is supported by volunteer curators.



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