Trial to start for 2 officers in prisoner's death

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The stage is set for two more Mid-State corrections officers for trial.

On April 27, at the Oneida County Courthouse, Caleb Blair and Craig Klemick were before Judge Michael Nolan as their attorneys and the prosecution laid the groundwork for jury selection to begin May 4. They will be tried together for the death of Messiah Nantwi.

Blair is charged with second-degree murder, first-degree manslaughter, first-degree gang assault, second-degree gang assault, fifth-degree conspiracy and first-degree offering a false instrument for file. Klemick is charged with first-degree manslaughter, first-degree gang assault, second-degree gang assault, fifth-degree conspiracy, and first-degree offering a false instrument for filing.

The indictment says that Nantwi, an inmate at Mid-State Correctional Facility, was beaten to death on March 1, 2025, by a Correction Emergency Response Team to the point of unresponsiveness and beaten twice more, with his hands cuffed behind his back.

Blair and Klemick were both offered a final plea bargain, with Blair offered the chance to plead guilty to either first-degree manslaughter or first-degree gang assault for a sentence of 16 years in prison. Meanwhile, Klemick was offered a chance to plead guilty to offering a false instrument for file in exchange for an indeterminate sentence of one and a third to four years in prison. Both Blair and Klemick turned down the plea bargains, with Nolan reminding the two that there was no guarantee that they would be able to take those plea bargains once the trial started.

If convicted on their top charges, Blair and Klemick face up to 25 years in state prison.

Jury selection is expected to start May 4, with the trial itself lasting for an expected two weeks.

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