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DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

TODD SPITZER

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PRESS RELEASE

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**44-year-old woman with three prior driving under the influence convictions
pleads guilty to murder of 8-months pregnant woman while driving under the
influence of drugs while on a suspended license**

Doctors performed an emergency C-section to save the unborn baby's life.

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A 44-year-old woman pleaded guilty today to murder for being under the influence of numerous drugs when she hit and killed a 23-year-old woman who was 8-months pregnant out for a walk with her husband in Anaheim. The couple's infant daughter survived the crash after being delivered through an emergency C-section following the death of her mother. The little girl, now three-years-old, was in court this morning with her father to hear the plea.

Courtney Fritz Pandolfi, 44, of Garden Grove, had three previous driving under the influence convictions and one pending driving under the influence of drugs case from November 2019 when she got behind the wheel of a white Jeep SUV and jumped the curb and onto an Anaheim sidewalk on August 11, 2020.

Twenty-three-year-old Yesenia Aguilar, who was 8-months pregnant, was holding hands with her husband around 7:30 p.m. while walking on the sidewalk on Katella Avenue near Bayless Street in the city of Anaheim.

After jumping on to the sidewalk, Pandolfi crashed into a metal newspaper stand and continued driving down the sidewalk, hitting the pregnant woman. Pandolfi continued to drive down the sidewalk until the Jeep was disabled, travelling a total of 347 ft without ever braking or taking evasive action.

Aguilar died from her injuries. Doctors performed an emergency C-section to save her unborn baby's life.

As her murder trial was set to begin, Pandolfi, pleaded guilty to one felony count of murder, one felony count of driving under the influence of drugs causing bodily injury with two or more priors, two misdemeanor counts of driving on a suspended license, one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence of drugs, and one misdemeanor count of possession of controlled substance paraphernalia. Several of the counts she pleaded guilty to were connected to her November 2019 driving under the influence of drugs case.

Pandolfi was under the influence of a drug cocktail, including cocaine and methamphetamine, when she hit and killed Yesenia Aguilar in August 2020. She was high on a combination of drugs including methamphetamine and morphine when she was arrested for driving under the influence of drugs in Costa Mesa in November 2019.

Pandolfi also pleaded guilty to two drug related charges while she was incarcerated awaiting trial.

She faces a maximum sentence of 15 years to life if convicted on all charges.

Drivers convicted of driving under the influence in California are required to be given what is known as a Watson advisement that informs them that if they kill someone while driving under the influence they can be charged with murder. Pandolfi was convicted of driving under the influence of drugs in 2008, in 2015, and in 2016. She received the Watson advisement all three times. The Steve Ambriz Act, authored by then-Assembly member Todd Spitzer, requires people applying for a California driver's license to sign a form acknowledging that they can be charged with murder if they kill someone while driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

"This was not an accident. This is a woman who made a habit of driving while high. She was warned over and over again about the dangers of her actions. She knew it was wrong, but she decided that being high was more important than the life of a young woman who was just weeks away from becoming a mother for the first time," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "Yesenia's memory will live on through her beautiful, little girl, but that little girl is growing up without ever being able to hug her mother or hear her voice because a stranger decided to make the selfish decision to get behind the wheel while high on drugs."

Senior Deputy District Attorney Brian Orue of the Homicide Unit is prosecuting this case.

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