

# Capital Murder Charge Against Soering Stands

BEDFORD (AP) — A judge has refused to drop a capital murder charge against Jens Soering, who was extradited from Great Britain on a promise that U.S. officials would seek lesser charges.

Bedford County Circuit Judge William Sweeney on Tuesday denied a defense motion to dismiss the capital murder charge against Soering, who is accused of killing a Bedford County couple in 1985.

Soering, 23, was arrested in London in 1986 and returned to Roanoke Regional Airport on Friday. He based much of his extradition fight on whether he would have to face capital murder, which carries the death penalty, or first-degree murder, which has a maximum punishment of life in prison.

Great Britain does not have the death penalty, and British authorities asked for assurances that Soering would not face the capital murder charge before they allowed him to be returned to Virginia.

Commonwealth's Attorney James Updike objected to the defense request Tuesday that the capital murder charge be dismissed.

"The word 'dismissal' in this case sends cold chills up my spine," Updike said.

The prosecutor said he wants to avoid any legal loopholes that might allow Soering to escape prosecution.

Sweeney told Updike and Neaton

they would have to work out a different way to downgrade the murder charge before proceeding with a first-degree murder trial.

The judge said he would entertain further motions at a Feb. 7 hearing and set a trial date of March 8 over the objections of defense attorney Richard Neaton, who said that would not be enough time to prepare a defense.

Soering is charged with killing Derek Haysom, 72, and Nancy Haysom, 55, in March 1985 at the couple's Boonsboro home.

The couple's daughter, Elizabeth Haysom told authorities she and Soering had plotted the murders to end her parents' meddling in her life.

Soering and Miss Haysom were arrested on an unrelated check fraud charge in Great Britain in April 1986.

Miss Haysom, now 24, did not resist extradition. She was convicted of being an accessory to the murders and is serving a 90-year prison term.

Soering remains in custody at the Bedford County jail.

Sweeney asked attorneys for both sides to refrain from talking to the media until the end of the trial, but the judge agreed, over Neaton's objection, to allow courtroom camera coverage of the trial.

Three Virginia circuit courts, including Bedford County, allow cameras as part of a three-year experiment.

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