Gavin Scott Hapgood Update: Claims Self-Defense in Anguilla Manslaughter Case

By Janet Winikoff

Published May 3, 2019 at 4:13 p.m. | Updated May 5, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.



Photo of Gavin Scott Hapgood allegedly showing defensive wounds after the death of Kenny "Mylez" Mitchel. Hapgood has been charged with manslaughter resulting in Mitchel's death. ***Courtesy: Hapgood Family***

Who was the victim and who was the assailant? Conflicting accounts of a death on the tropical island of Anguilla have prompted the family of Gavin Scott Hapgood to issue two written statements proclaiming that he acted in self-defense. Hapgood says he was protecting himself and his two daughters from an armed robber who entered their hotel room. But the family of Kenny "Mylez" Mitchel is disputing that story, claiming their loved one is the true victim.

The Hapgood family was vacationing at the Malliouhana Resort on April 13 when an altercation took place between Hapgood, 44, and hotel maintenance worker Mitchel, 27, in the Hapgoods' hotel suite. The Anguilla Police Force conducted an investigation and arrested Hapgood on April 16, charging him with manslaughter.

Mitchel's death certificate indicates his cause of death resulted from "prone restraint, positional asphyxia and blunt force trauma to the head, neck, and torso." The police have not released any information about the investigation.

Hapgood's bail of $74,000 was initially denied on April 16 by Anguillan magistrate Keithley Benjamin. *The Anguillan* has quoted the magistrate as saying, "the charge of manslaughter is a serious offence," adding, "that the court has a discretion on the matter and while there may be good reason for bail to be granted, the court has to balance the interest of the person charged, the public interest and the interest of justice." But

Hapgood's bail for $200,000 was approved. He flew back to the United States on a private jet after being released from jail.

A successful financial advisor from Darien, Connecticut, Hapgood is listed as working for the international firm UBS in Manhattan. A representative with UBS told *Page Six*, "We are aware of the recent events in Anguilla and are following the situation closely. As you will appreciate, it would not be appropriate for us to provide any comment in relation to an active criminal proceeding."

A statement from the family says that Hapgood is active in his community. "Scott has spent his entire life doing the right things: he is married to his college sweetheart, he has worked at the same company for over 20 years, he is a volunteer coach and a loving and devoted father."

Mitchel, whose last name also appears as "Mitchell," was a husband and father who worked at the resort as a maintenance engineer. "Mylez and Emily both migrated to Anguilla. Mylez from Dominica at a very young age and Emily from the UK. They found love on Anguilla and together had a beautiful baby girl named Mylie. The Anguilla people and the tourists who encountered the Mitchells fell in love with the family. We are broken that their lives fell apart on our Anguilla, tranquility wrapped in blue," the family's GoFundMe page states.

The Hapgood Family Is Claiming Mitchel Used a Ruse to Get Into Their Hotel Room

According to the Hapgoods' May 2 statement, "The man knocked on the door, saying he was there to fix a broken sink. Scott indicated the sinks were not broken as far as he was aware, but that the man was free to have a look. Like any of us would, he trusted a hotel staff person in uniform." The statement says the family had never met or spoken with Mitchel.

Mitchel's GoFundMe page tells a different version of events. According to family and friends, Hapgood called the front desk and asked for Mitchel "specifically to come up to the room." Police have not released any information from their investigation as to why Mitchel was in the Hapgoods' suite.

The Hapgood Family Says Mitchel Tried to Rob Them

Hapgood maintains that Mitchel attempted to rob him and that he was defending himself and his family. "Attacked without warning in his family's hotel room by a maintenance worker who was armed and demanding money, Scott Hapgood acted in self-defense to protect the lives of his young daughters and himself," the first statement from the Hapgood family reads. The second statement adds, "Scott Hapgood did what any parent would do - defend himself and his children. And thanks to his actions, Scott and our family survived this terrible encounter." The Hapgoods have stated that Mitchel was wielding a knife; however, authorities have not revealed the discovery of any weapons.

Mitchel's family says that at 5'8" and 130 pounds, he was no match for Hapgood, who stands 6'2" and was a former football player for Dartmouth. "Now we're to believe that 130 pound Kenny went to Mr. Hapgood's room where he says he and his two daughters were enjoying the day. Mr. Hapgood is a 243 pound man and twice the size of Kenny yet Kenny decided to rob this man while wearing his work uniform which included his name tag," said an April 26 post on the Unity for Justice Facebook page.

It's Unclear Who Was Restraining Mitchel

The May 2 statement says that during the attack, Mitchel bit Hapgood several times and that "Scott was literally fighting for his life." The family statement goes on to say that Mitchel was eventually restrained by a security guard. But *The Daily Mail* is reporting that Mitchel's father announced during a radio interview that Hapgood was on top of Mitchel and that "none of (hotel employees) tried to take this man off my son, not one, from what I understood."

"This is just indescribable now. Every story comes out with a different fact. In this one there is no mention of a knife. In this version he was bitten. Someone must have told (Scott Hapgood) no knife was recovered at the crime scene," says one Unity for Justice post, adding, "However, I thought I saw a puncture wound in the photo. Kenny must have had a beak," it continued.

There Are Conflicting Accounts Regarding Who Was in the Room During the Fight

The Hapgoods' May 2 statement says that the incident occurred while Scott Hapgood was in the room with his children, and denies reports that wife Kallie witnessed the altercation. "Scott's wife was not present in the room at the time of the attack on Scott and his minor children," it said.

This contradicts unconfirmed reports that Kallie Hapgood was in the room, recording the incident on her phone. The Hapgoods' second statement denies this allegation. It is unknown if Anguillan authorities have any type of recording of the incident.

Hapgood's Release From Jail Has Sparked Controversy

Tensions have risen on the island as some citizens believe Hapgood received preferential treatment by authorities, prompted by race, wealth and an attempt to protect the country's tourism industry. Mitchel's father reportedly told a radio show that hotel employees did not pull Hapgood off of Mitchel because they feared they would "lose their job for touching a tourist." *The Daily Mail* reported that the Malliouhana Resort paid for the Hapgood family to stay at the Four Seasons resort soon after Mitchel's death, another contentious point among Anguillans, who see this as yet another attempt to placate wealthy tourists.

Anguilla is a British Overseas Territory with a population of approximately 15,000 that is 90% black and 3% white. Some Anguillans have expressed outrage that Hapgood stayed at the posh Four Seasons after his release from jail, then flew back to the U.S. on a private jet. There are also concerns he will not return for his August 22 court appearance.

Anguilla's Chief Minister Victor Banks went to Facebook on April 20 to say Mitchel's death was "a dark chapter in our nation's history," adding, "My colleagues and I understand the anger and frustrations resulting from this fatal incident. We appreciate and share the concerns expressed over the optics of these occurrences."

Former Parliamentary Secretary of Tourism for Anguilla Haydn Hughes posted a video that denies there is any racial tension on the island but admits this case shows a need for criminal justice reform. "The optics surrounding (Hapgood's) court hearing, arrest, and bizarre release created an atmosphere of distrust for law enforcement and judiciary."

Hughes pointed to a case where an 18-year-old Anguillan man was arrested, had his name published in the paper and was forced to surrender his travel documents while "someone who murdered another enjoys the luxury of what we have to offer, under an alias, and is eventually allowed to return to the comfort of his home, in another country, in less than a week."

Portfolio copy cleaned from an archived Heavy.com page. Web navigation, sharing controls, embedded social-media material, blank image placeholders, duplicate image-caption fragments, and stray markup were removed. Obvious transcription and punctuation errors were lightly corrected while preserving the article's substance.