

Alec Baldwin 'Rust' case suddenly dismissed over withheld evidence. It's a 'complete embarrassment' to the prosecutors, expert says.

Legal experts had told Yahoo the prosecution would face an "uphill battle" if the trial were to continue.

Taryn Ryder

·Writer, Yahoo Entertainment

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The judge dismissed the involuntary manslaughter charges against Alec Baldwin on Friday, hours after his lawyers alleged police and prosecutors hid evidence related to the live round that killed *Rust* cinematographer [Halyna Hutchins](#) in 2021. It's a

stunning turn of events just two days after testimony in the criminal case began.

"The late discovery of this evidence during trial has impeded the effective use of evidence in such a way that it has impacted the fundamental fairness of the proceedings," Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer told the court. "If this conduct does not rise to the level of bad faith it certainly comes so near to bad faith to show signs of scorching."



Alec Baldwin and his wife, Hilaria Baldwin, embrace after involuntary manslaughter charges were dismissed by a judge on Friday. (Ramsay de Give/Pool/AFP via Getty Images)

The dismissal was with prejudice, which means the prosecution cannot retry the involuntary manslaughter case against Baldwin. The 66-year-old actor sobbed in the courtroom when the decision was announced, and hugged wife, Hilaria Baldwin. He faced up to 18 months in prison if convicted.

Criminal defense lawyer Lauren Johnson-Norris told Yahoo Entertainment that she's "not surprised this case ultimately ended up as a complete embarrassment to the prosecution."

"Not only was their theory against Baldwin untenable, they withheld exculpatory evidence in an effort to convict him," she explained. "The dismissal with prejudice puts an end to this spectacle of a trial and I would expect Gutierrez-Reed to be filing a motion for a new trial Monday morning."

The jury was sent home early Friday when Baldwin's defense attorneys filed a motion to dismiss as they accused the prosecution of withholding evidence. The judge heard witness testimony from multiple people before making a decision. The crux of the issue was ammunition that was brought into the sheriff's office in March 2024. Hutchins was killed when a live round of ammunition was discharged from a gun Baldwin was rehearsing with. The actor's team successfully argued the state should have shared the evidence.

Before the ruling was official, Johnson-Norris told Yahoo the prosecution faced an "uphill battle."

The trial got off to a somewhat lackluster start on July 10 as the state began presenting its case. After Baldwin's big win on July 8, in which Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer ruled that his role as a producer on *Rust* cannot be entered into evidence, the state had to prove that Baldwin the actor was culpable in the 2021 death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins.

They need to show that Baldwin acted negligently in firing the gun while acting on the set. This is problematic for the prosecution because the armorer who loaded the gun has already been convicted of the same crime," Johnson-Norris explained to Yahoo

Entertainment. Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who was responsible for weapons on set, has already been sentenced to 18 months in prison.

"[The prosecution] brought in evidence to try to show [Baldwin] was indifferent to what has happened. But the question is whether he was negligent at the time of firing, and the evidence does not point in that direction," Johnson-Norris continued.

"The prosecution has an ethical duty to provide the defense all exculpatory evidence. This ensures that trials are fair. The prosecutors' failure to notify Baldwin's attorneys of this evidence could be misconduct," she continues. "The judge's dismissal of the case with prejudice — meaning it can't be brought again — is the result of those actions."

Baldwin was charged with involuntary manslaughter, the same charge as Gutierrez-Reed, and faces the same max sentence. He was holding a .45-caliber revolver that discharged a round of live ammunition, which should never have been on set, killing Hutchins and wounding the film's director, Joel Souza.

In opening statements, Baldwin's defense attorney Alex Spiro blamed others — like Gutierrez-Reed and first assistant director David Halls, who was in charge of safety on set — for failing to properly check the gun before handing it to the actor.

Top family law attorney [Chris Melcher](#) told Yahoo that the jury would have had the "ultimate question" of deciding whether it was "reasonable for anyone to accept someone else's word that a gun is unloaded."

The prosecution claimed Baldwin routinely failed to do safety checks on the set of *Rust* with the "inexperienced" on-set armorer. They alleged he "mishandled" the gun that went off when he was rehearsing a scene for the Western film. Baldwin publicly maintained

he never pulled the trigger. The state called experts to testify that it's not possible for the gun to have gone off without the trigger being pulled. The gun was ultimately damaged when the FBI tested it to determine if that was possible.

In June, Baldwin's lawyers filed a motion to dismiss the case due to the damage of the firearm during testing but the motion was denied.

This story has been updated throughout to reflect that the case was dismissed.