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COWETA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

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July 8, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARROLL COUNTY JURY CONVICTS AARON JUJUAN SHELTON OF FELONY MURDER, AGGRAVATED ASSAULT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, AND OTHER CHARGES

On July 7, 2023, a Carroll County jury returned a verdict of guilty against Aaron JuJuan Shelton, 25, of Birmingham, Alabama, for multiple counts of Felony Murder, Aggravated Assault on Law Enforcement Officers, Aggravated Battery on Law Enforcement Officers, Felony Fleeing and Attempting to Elude, Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon, and other charges. Superior Court Judge Erica Tisinger presided over the trial and will sentence the defendant on July 13, 2023 at 2:00 pm.

The case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Jep Bendinger, Senior Assistant District Attorney Lara Todd, Assistant District Attorney Caley McDonald, and DA Investigator Katia Detwiler. Several law enforcement agencies responded to this crime in real time and many assisted in the investigation and prosecution, including Carrollton Police Department, Carroll County Sheriff's Office, Villa Rica Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Douglasville Police Department, Coweta County Sheriff's Office, University of West Georgia Police Department, the Georgia State Patrol (GSP), and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. I commend and thank the men and women in law enforcement from the surrounding jurisdictions who played a part in this case. The evidence presented at trial revealed the following:

On April 12, 2021, at approximately 3:30 a.m., GSP Trooper Zack Pruitt observed a Nissan Sentra driving 111 mph on Interstate 20 Eastbound in Carroll County. Trooper Pruitt initiated a traffic stop on the vehicle, and a chase ensued at speeds exceeding 100 mph. Defendant Aaron Shelton was driving the vehicle and his cousin Pier Shelton was in the passenger seat. As the defendant fled from Trooper Pruitt, Pier Shelton fired an AK-47 style rifle at the trooper from the front passenger window. Pier Shelton's shots hit the trooper's vehicle and disabled it, but the trooper was uninjured. Local law enforcement agencies were notified of the chase and that shots were fired and responded to the area.

Approximately 30 minutes later, Carrollton Police Department officers identified the vehicle and the Defendant again fled from law enforcement. The chase was led by Carrollton Police Department Sergeant Rob Holloway and Corporal Richard Cheatwood. The defendant fled from the Highway 166 bypass northbound near Newnan Road to Highway 61 northbound, again reaching speeds in excess of 100 mph.

Once again, Pier Shelton fired his weapon from the vehicle at the pursuing police officers. By this time, deputies with the Carroll County Sheriff's Office had also joined the pursuit, and they also took fire. A bullet struck Sgt. Holloway in the head through the windshield of his patrol car, causing him to lose

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control of his vehicle and strike a utility pole. Carrollton Police Department Officers stopped to render aid and Carroll County Deputies led by Corporal Jamison Troutt and Deputy Mike Reed continued the pursuit.

As the vehicle approached the city of Villa Rica, just south of Whitworth Road, the defendant turned off of Highway 61, and both suspects fled on foot. A perimeter was soon established along Highway 61 and Whitworth Road. Approximately 25 minutes later, Villa Rica Police Department Officer Chase Gordy was fired upon by Pier Shelton while guarding the northern perimeter along Whitworth Road. Officer Gordy was shot in the arm and the leg. Carroll County Sheriff's Office Cpl. Troutt and Deputy Jay Repetto immediately went to Officer Gordy's location and Pier Shelton fired at them, striking Deputy Repetto in the arm. Both deputies returned fire, striking and killing Pier Shelton. Aaron Shelton continued to flee on foot northbound and ultimately hid in the woods. GSP's aviation unit assisted in locating Aaron Shelton, and he was apprehended by members of the GSP's SWAT team.

The indictment against Aaron Shelton contained 22 counts. He was charged for his actions as the driver of the vehicle and as a party to the crimes of Pier Shelton. He was also charged with three counts of felony murder for committing felony crimes which led to the death of Pier Shelton. The evidence presented in this case proved, and the jury found, that Aaron Shelton willingly participated in all of the crimes that occurred during this crime spree. In light of this evidence, the jury rejected his claim that he was coerced by Pier Shelton.

This case demonstrates the importance and value of Georgia's felony murder statute. It is just that Aaron Shelton face a mandatory life sentence for felony murder as a consequence of his being a party to the crime of Pier Shelton's attempts to kill numerous police officers which resulted in Pier Shelton being killed by law enforcement as they defended themselves.

More importantly, this case serves as a reminder to all of us what every law enforcement officer and their family face every single day that they put on their uniform. Protecting and serving their community means they are willing to put their lives on the line at a moment's notice. It is too easy to forget and take for granted the bravery exhibited every day by our law enforcement community. We all owe them our thanks and respect every day.

At the conclusion of the Sheltons' crime spree, three law enforcement officers had been shot and seven had been fired upon. Miraculously, Sgt. Holloway survived being shot in the head and has returned home to his family. These crimes affected the officers involved, their families, their agencies, and our entire community, and it will continue to. I am in awe of the bravery and commitment to service of each of these officers, and all of those who serve alongside them.

John H. Cranford Jr.
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Coweta Judicial Circuit