



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, August 28, 2009

*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

For Information Contact Public Affairs
SANDY RAYNOR
Telephone: (602) 514-7625
Cell: (602) 525-2681

MESA MAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR SECOND DEGREE MURDER

PHOENIX – Joshua Phillips, 33, of Mesa, Ariz., was sentenced today to 20 years in federal prison by U.S. District Judge David G. Campbell. Phillips pleaded guilty on April 28, 2009, to Second Degree Murder.

Phillips and co-defendant Augustine Thomas were involved with the homicide of an adult male on the Gila River Indian Reservation. The victim had allegedly been spreading rumors that he was having an intimate relationship with co-defendant Thomas' girlfriend. Those rumors caused Thomas to become upset and to enlist the assistance of Phillips, to "watch his back." Prior to traveling to the scene, Phillips allegedly called a fellow "brother" of the Warrior Society and asked for permission to assist Thomas in the assault.

When the pair arrived at the victim's home, the victim came outside with a garden hoe. The victim allegedly began hitting Thomas' vehicle with the hoe. Thomas then got out and began stabbing the victim. Phillips assisted in the assault because Thomas was losing the fight. Phillips grabbed the hoe from the victim and began wielding it. The two men overpowered the victim and repeatedly stabbed, beat and kicked him. The victim died at the scene as a result of multiple stab wounds suffered during the assault. Thomas pleaded guilty to the same offense and is scheduled to be sentenced on November 23, 2009.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Gila River Police Department and the Salt River Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Sharon Sexton and Heather Belt, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-449-PHX-DGC
RELEASE NUMBER: 2009-276(Phillips)

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