



U.S. Department of Justice

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DRUG TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT

Little Rock, Arkansas - Jane W. Duke, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that Calvin Stovall was sentenced to life imprisonment for his involvement in a large-scale marijuana trafficking conspiracy. Stovall's sentence stems from a guilty plea he entered on January 31, 2008.

On May 5, 2004, Stovall and co-defendant Vertis Clay were indicted by a federal grand jury of conspiracy to distribute and possess marijuana, conspiracy to use a firearm during a drug trafficking offense, and committing the first degree murder of Darryl Johnson with a firearm during a drug trafficking offense. Shortly before the scheduled trial date in October 2007, Stovall's case was severed and Clay proceeded to trial. On October 24, 2007, a federal jury convicted Clay of all charges and sentenced him to life imprisonment on the murder charge. United States District Judge William R. Wilson subsequently sentenced Clay to the maximum statutory sentence for conspiracy to distribute marijuana, which is 40 years, plus a consecutive 10 year sentence for using a firearm during the conspiracy. The sentences on these two convictions were ordered to run consecutively to the jury's life imprisonment sentence on the murder conviction.

During Clay's trial and during the sentencing phases for both Stovall and Clay, prosecutors focused on the especially heinous, cruel, and depraved manner in which Johnson's murder occurred; the fact that the murder was committed for pecuniary gain; and that Clay committed the murder after substantial planning and premeditation. The evidence established that Clay and his associate, Darryl Walker, were hired and paid by Stovall to rob and murder Johnson. Walker described in his testimony how he and Clay brutally murdered Johnson on July 20, 2003 in Johnson's Pine Bluff, Arkansas home. Prior to Johnson's death, he was shot in the leg, bound and blindfolded, threatened with a hot iron, sodomized with a broomstick, and repeatedly cut with a knife. A state medical examiner testified that Johnson's throat had also been slit. However, the 38-year-old Johnson was ultimately killed by Clay when Clay shot him

in the back of the head at close range.

Walker previously pleaded guilty to murdering Johnson and testified against Clay at his trial. On November 19, 2007, Walker received a sentence of 24 years imprisonment for his participation in the offense.

Under the terms of Stovall's plea agreement, the United States agreed to dismiss the additional charges alleging Stovall's involvement in the 2003 murder of Johnson. However, under federal law, Stovall's involvement in the murder—if proven by a preponderance of the evidence, can be relied upon in determining the appropriate sentence. At the conclusion of Stovall's sentencing hearing, Judge Wilson found that, in fact, the United States had proven Stovall's involvement in Johnson's murder by a preponderance of the evidence.

“The sentencing of Calvin Stovall closes the book on this case from a trial standpoint. Two killers---Vertis Clay and Calvin Stovall---will never regain their liberty. Their accomplice, Darryl Walker, will be taken out of society for a very long time as well. In a case as brutal as this, no lesser penalties would have been acceptable,” Duke stated.

This case was the result of an extensive four year Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Investigation of the drug trafficking organization has resulted in the conviction of 25 individuals in five separate cases. In addition to DEA and ICE, other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have assisted in this case, including: The Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS CID), The Arkansas State Police, The Arkansas Highway Police, The Pine Bluff Police Department, The Sherwood Police Department, The Little Rock Police Department, and The Hazen Police Department. The case was prosecuted for the United States by Assistant United States Attorneys Joe Volpe and Anne Gardner.

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