



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Teenager Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison on Murder, Other Charges in 2008 Killing of Off-Duty Federal Police Officer

WASHINGTON - Lavander Javon Williams, 19, of Washington, D.C., has been sentenced to 25 years of incarceration on charges in the September 2008 killing of Kwamari Harrell, an off-duty federal police officer, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced today.

Williams was convicted by a jury in October 2010 of second degree murder while armed, carrying a pistol during a crime of violence, and carrying a pistol without a license. He was sentenced on February 25, 2011 in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by the Honorable Judge Michael L. Rankin.

According to the evidence at trial, Kwamari Harrell, 36, was visiting his brother at his home in Northeast Washington, D.C. Harrell's brother, Jellani Kush, is an Afrocentric motivational speaker and mentor. On the evening of September 27, 2008, the two noticed a group of teenagers smoking marijuana and acting rowdy on the porch of a nearby home.

Kush, who had repeatedly tried to counsel these teenagers, and who had become frustrated with his inability to effect change, decided to take pictures of them to send to the property owner. Harrell - a federal police officer, who worked for the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) - offered to go in his place. At the time, Harrell was off duty and in plain clothes, and he was not carrying his service weapon.

The teenagers did not appreciate being photographed. Two female teenagers - one armed with a knife - confronted Harrell, and a brief altercation ensued, with one of the teenagers stabbing Harrell in the ear. After the tussle was over, Williams appeared from behind a parked car and shot and killed Harrell. Williams then fled the area and disposed of the murder weapon. He went into hiding for one month before being found by the authorities and arrested.

At trial, the defendant claimed that he acted in self-defense and defense of the two teenaged girls involved in the attack.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the work of Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Detectives Earl Delauder, Brian Kasul, King Watts, and Gail Russell Brown. He also praised the efforts of MPD Officers Ishevetta Sawyer and Ezequiel Vazquez.

U.S. Attorney Machen also praised the work of employees in his office, including Joshua Ellen of the Litigation Services Unit and Marcey Rinker of the Victim Witness Assistance Unit. Finally, he thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jocelyn Ballantine and Glenn Kirschner, who tried the case, and former Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lynn Haaland and Michael Glynn, who investigated and indicted the case.

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