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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY TIMOTHY J. HEAPHY

I. Introduction

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here today. My name is Tim Heaphy and I am the United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia.

I have asked everyone here today to announce the guilty plea in a very significant case in this district - United States v. Ralph Leon Jackson. Just a short while ago upstairs in United States District Court, Mr. Jackson pleaded guilty to committing a brutal and unprovoked murder on the Blue Ridge Parkway last April. I want to talk about that awful event and the investigation which led to this plea and resolution of the criminal case.

II. Jackson Case

On the evening of April 5, 2010 Christina Floyd and Timothy Davis decided to take a drive up the Blue Ridge Parkway to watch the sunset. They parked at one of the most beautiful spots on the parkway - an overlook called Rock Point. Mr. Davis and Ms. Floyd were friends from their days of working at WNRN, a radio station in Charlottesville.

Shortly after arriving at the Rock Point Overlook, the two victims sat on a wooden guard rail overlooking the National Forest. They talked. They watched the sunset. They enjoyed the beauty that the park has to offer at this time of year.

At some point, Mr. Davis and Ms. Floyd noticed a red vehicle pull up into the parking area behind them. The two made note that the driver of the car, later found to be Ralph Leon Jackson, was alone. They figured he was waiting for someone and payed no real attention to the man.

Approximately 15 minutes later their worlds changed forever. As

Mr. Davis and Ms. Floyd continued to talk and enjoy the overlook, Mr. Jackson pulled out a shotgun and fired at them. Ms. Floyd heard a loud ringing and looked over and noticed Mr. Davis had thrown his hands up, was groaning and had blood all over his face. She looked at the red car and noticed the long shotgun being pointed at them from the driver's side window.

Mr. Jackson exited his vehicle and, with his gun in hand, began walking toward Mr. Davis and Ms. Floyd - both of whom were now injured. Tim Davis had fallen onto the ground, and Christina had been struck in the face and shoulder with turkey shot. As Mr. Jackson came closer, the terror of what was unfolding was dawned on both of them.

Mr. Jackson fired again, striking Christina, causing her to fall on the ground near Mr. Davis on the forest side of the guard rail. Once he saw that his prey was wounded Jackson set the gun down and paused, likely surveying what damage he had wrought.

The momentary pause gave Christina Floyd an opportunity to act, which she seized. With a remarkable degree of courage, she engaged in

a physical altercation with Mr. Jackson. They two literally fought, back and forth in a violent struggle. In that fight, Ms. Floyd ripped Mr. Jackson's shirt. She came out of her shoes. Somehow her sun dress was shaken loose from her shoulders. She ultimately fell down from the overlook to a ledge six feet below. She struggled to her feet and was able to climb up to level ground, further north than the spot where she had fought with Mr. Jackson.

This struggle did not end the encounter. Apparently unsatisfied with the damage he had done, Mr. Jackson began throwing large rocks at Christina Floyd. He struck her several times with those rocks, causing multiple skull fractures and a broken finger. At one point, Mr. Jackson stopped throwing rocks and went to retrieve his shotgun, likely to continue his shooting spree.

Thankfully, Christina was able to flee the scene and ran, barefoot down the parkway, desperately seeking safety. At this point, in a remarkable act of kindness, Richard and Georgia McDaniel, who were driving down the road spotted Christina, and after seeing she was frantic

and covered in blood, pulled her into their truck and drove her away from the scene.

Christina Floyd was taken for medical help where it was found she sustained a collapsed lung as a result of shotgun pellets, two skull fractures, a broken finger and gashes to her head for which she received ten staples. She has also had to relive the horror of this incident again and again, causing repeated psychological injury that will likely linger forever.

Tragically, Timothy Davis did not escape the rampage of Ralph Leon Jackson. When rescue crews arrived, they found his body some 200-300 below the level of the parkway. The force of the shotgun blast had propelled him down below the overlook, where he rolled a considerable distance to the location where he was found. Due to the heroic efforts of first responders, Mr. Davis lived for an additional five days. He ultimately succumbed, however, to the serious injuries he had suffered - gunshot wounds to his head and torso.

Just two days after the incident, an anonymous tip to Crime

Stoppers pointed law enforcement to Mr. Jackson. Agents acted on that information immediately. They confronted Mr. Jackson and obtained a warrant for his arrest. They corroborated information about the shootings and developed sufficient evidence to prove that Mr. Jackson was the man who had committed this awful act. That evidence was ultimately put before a grand jury in United States District Court in Charlottesville, which indicted Mr. Jackson for the murder of Mr. Davis and the attempted murder of Ms. Floyd.

This morning, Mr. Jackson entered a guilty plea to four counts. Count one charges the defendant with assaulting Christina Floyd with the intent to commit murder, a charge that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years. Count three charges Jackson with discharging a firearm during a crime of violence, the attack on Christina Floyd, which carries a possible sentence of 10 years to life.

Count four charges Jackson with willfully, deliberately, maliciously and with pre-meditation and malice killing Timothy Davis. And finally, Count five charges the defendant with discharging a firearm

during and in relation to a crime of violence which results in the death of another, specifically the killing of Mr. Davis. Both counts four and five carry a maximum possible sentence of death.

Pursuant to his guilty plea, Mr. Jackson has agreed to a pre-determined sentence - life without parole for count four, the killing of Timothy Davis and to a yet-to-be determined term of incarceration within the sentencing guidelines for the remaining counts. The plea ensures that Mr. Jackson will die in prison. He will never get parole or be eligible for release for any reason. He will endure the remainder of his days confined to a prison cell in a federal penitentiary. This is harsh but just punishment for an act so brutal, so brazen, so destructive, and so evidently motiveless.

The question that many of you and the people watching and reading about this guilty plea want to know is why. Why did Ralph Jackson drive to the Rock Point Overlook and start shooting? Why did he kill Tim Davis - a man he'd never met, and try to kill Christina Floyd, a woman who was a total stranger? The truth is that we don't know

exactly why Mr. Jackson did what he did. He offered explanations to law enforcement that weren't credible. We found no evidence of a mental disease or defect. We can only speculate as to the motive for this awful crime. Thankfully, Mr. Jackson will be incarcerated and away from society, incapable of further victimization of the sort he committed last April.

III. Law Enforcement

The result in this case is a credit to the fine work done by the local, state and federal investigators who brought Mr. Jackson to justice.

First, I'd like to recognize August County Commonwealth's Attorney Lee Ervin. When this attack occurred, Lee and I talked about the investigation and looked carefully at the proper venue for the prosecution. We agreed that the case was more appropriately handled in federal court, as it happened on federal land and needed the assistance of federal investigators. The decision was joint and cooperative. It was a model for how these decisions should be made - thoughtfully, and with an eye on the best outcome, rather than turf battles or personality

conflicts.

That same level of cooperation came together on the investigative team. The federal agents from the ATF, FBI, and Park Rangers worked seamlessly with the Augusta County Sheriff's Office. The team worked quickly and professionally to apprehend Mr. Jackson. Within a matter of days, this team "got its man" and was able to put the public's mind at ease regarding a possible murderer on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Some of those men and women who investigated this case are here today and I would like to take a moment to recognize them and thank them for the hard work and dedication they displayed in working on this very difficult case.

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III. Victims

I was joined in the courtroom today by Jennifer Haley, the mother of Christina Shay Floyd, the brave survivor of Mr. Jackson's attack. A young woman who fought back against the rage of a murderer, and

Leticia Davis, the mother of Timothy Davis, the young man who was so tragically killed by the defendant on that April evening last year.

I want to extend my thanks to both families for being here today, the courage, bravery and perseverance that Christina displayed under such tragic circumstances are an inspiration to us all.

And to Mrs. Davis, as a parent, I offer you my deepest condolences on the loss of your son. Very few people can truly understand the hurt you feel each day. I only hope that by doing our jobs and holding Mr. Jackson accountable for his brutal crimes bring a small level of comfort to your broken heart.

IV. Conclusion

There is nothing that any one of us up here can say or do to ease the pain of Timothy Davis' mother. There is nothing we can do to erase the memories of that terrible night from the mind of Christina Floyd.

What we can do, however, is hold Mr. Jackson accountable for the horrendous crimes he committed on April 5, 2010. That is what we have

done in this case. We have brought a killer to justice and ensured he will never again be permitted to walk among us. He will spend the rest of his life behind the wall of a federal prison. And while that does not heal the scars left of the victims of this case, I hope it does serve as some form of closure for them.