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JURY RECOMMENDS DEATH FOR PINKNEY CARTER FOR 2002 MURDERS

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury has recommended the death penalty for Pinkney Carter for two counts of First-Degree Murder. Carter was previously convicted in 2005 for three counts of First-Degree Murder and was sentenced to life in Florida State Prison for one count and death for two counts. The penalty portion of Carter's trial was retried August 12-22, 2024, following a change in law relating to death penalty procedures. The Honorable Mark Borello will formally sentence Carter following a Spencer hearing at a later date.

In the early morning hours of July 24, 2002, Carter drove to his ex-girlfriend Elizabeth Smith-Reed's Arlington home. He ambushed and shot Smith-Reed, her new boyfriend Glen Pafford, and Smith-Reed's 16-year-old daughter Courtney Smith. Smith-Reed's other children — ages 6, 8, and 14 — were also in the home at the time. Her 14-year-old son ran out of his room with a BB gun after hearing shots fired. He found the three lying on the floor, and Carter had already run from the scene. The teen held his sister in his arms until first responders arrived. Smith-Reed and Pafford died on scene; Smith was taken to a hospital where she died a few days later. Carter fled to Mexico in attempts to evade arrest and threw the murder weapon into the Rio Grande River. He was arrested and jailed in Mexico but was ultimately released. Carter hid under an alias in western Kentucky until 2004 when a Kentucky State Police trooper recognized him from a Most Wanted poster. Carter was extradited back to Jacksonville.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Bernie De La Rionda and Chris Huband.