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JUDGE SENTENCES MCDOWELL TO DEATH FOR MURDER OF DEP. JOSHUA MOYERS

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that the Honorable James H. Daniel sentenced Patrick McDowell to death for the murder of 29-year-old Nassau County Deputy Joshua Moyers. McDowell previously pleaded guilty to First-Degree Murder; Injuring a Police Dog; and eight counts of Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer. A Nassau County jury recommended the death penalty for McDowell on April 25, 2024.

Around midnight on Sept. 23, 2021, Deputy Moyers was patrolling in Nassau County when he saw a red van with a stolen tag. He followed the van — driven by McDowell — out of a gas station and turned on his emergency lights. McDowell and the passenger in the van — Noelle Gale — had been smoking methamphetamine throughout the night. McDowell pulled over and Moyers asked for identification. McDowell provided a fake name and Gale showed a photo of her driver's license. Moyers radioed for backup as he continued the traffic stop. When Moyers reached for the driver's door handle as he asked McDowell to step out of the vehicle, McDowell grabbed his loaded gun and shot Moyers in the face. Moyers immediately fell to the ground, and McDowell leaned out of the van and shot Moyers twice in the back. McDowell told Gale that "it was me or him" and he was not going back to jail; McDowell had an outstanding arrest warrant for Violation of Probation at the time he was pulled over. He sped down Sandy Ford Road and left Moyers to die. Only a minute or so later, a deputy responded to assist Moyers with the traffic stop and found Moyers lying unresponsive with multiple gunshot wounds. Moyers was pronounced deceased days later. Gale turned herself in to the police shortly after while McDowell abandoned the van, armed himself, and hid in the woods at the end of Sandy Ford Road. Officers from across Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia responded to assist in the manhunt.

In the early morning hours of Sept. 24, 2021, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office SWAT Team along with NCSO deputies utilized JSO K9 Chaos to track McDowell. The K9 handler released Chaos, and

McDowell fired two shots, injuring K9 Chaos. Officers returned fire. It wouldn't be until Sept. 28 that McDowell was finally captured with the help of numerous agencies and JSO K9 Huk.

During the penalty phase prior to closing arguments, McDowell took the stand and confirmed the State's case admitting weeks before he planned to kill any law enforcement member who attempted to arrest him. On the night he killed Moyers, McDowell admitted he lured him to a dark, secluded area to carry this out.

"We thank the jury for their time and diligent attention to this most important matter. Their recommendation recognizes Josh's service in life as well as the cold and calculated manner of his death. Josh's family, fiancée, friends, and fellow officers have suffered immense pain from his senseless murder. I hope today's end of the penalty trial may begin the healing they deserve," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

The case was investigated by the Nassau County Sheriff's Office with assistance from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, Columbia County Sheriff's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, ATF Jacksonville, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement among many others. The case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant Mark Caliel and Circuit Court Director Chris Huband.