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DUVAL COUNTY JURY RECOMMENDS DEATH FOR MICHAEL JACKSON

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury has recommended death for Michael Jackson in the 2005 murder of Reggie and Carol Sumner. Jackson in 2007 was convicted of two counts of First-Degree Murder, two counts of Robbery, and two counts of Kidnapping to Commit a Felony, all related to the killing of the vulnerable couple. The penalty portion of Jackson's trial was held May 15-24, 2023, following a change in law relating to death penalty procedures. The Honorable Judge Michael Weatherby will formally sentence Jackson at a later date.

In 2005, Jackson and codefendants Tiffany Cole, Alan Wade, and Bruce Nixon used a toy gun to kidnap Reggie and Carol Sumner from their Jacksonville home, placed them in the trunk of Reggie Sumner's car, drove them to an isolated, wooded area in Georgia, and buried them alive in a pre-dug grave. The Sumners were Cole's neighbors in South Carolina before the couple sold their home and moved to Jacksonville. Jackson, the mastermind behind the crime and Cole's boyfriend, knew the elderly couple with diminished health had money from their recent home sale. After weeks of planning, the group led by Jackson enacted the plan. Despite the Sumners providing Jackson with the passcodes for various bank accounts, Jackson still killed them to eliminate them as witnesses. When police began looking for the couple, Jackson attempted to conceal their death by phoning the police station pretending to be Reggie Sumner, telling law enforcement the couple were out of town.

"This remains one of the most shocking and evil crimes our community has ever suffered — cold, calculated, premeditated, heinous, atrocious, cruel. Despite the passage of time, law enforcement and the prosecution, led by Alan Mizrahi, have remained steadfast in their commitment to this case and to the friends and family of Reggie and Carol Sumner," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

The case was investigated by Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney Alan Mizrahi and Joel Cooper.