

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE, MORGAN COUNTY DA ANNOUNCE SENTENCING FOR MULTIPLE SEX CRIMES, BURGLARIES IN COLD CASES FROM 1985, 1986

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange and Morgan County District Attorney Scott Anderson today announced three 99-year sentences for first-degree rapes and three 30-year sentences for first-degree burglaries in a cold case dating back to 1985 and 1986. David Leon Garth was found guilty of the multiple crimes by a jury in Morgan County Circuit Court.

Garth has been incarcerated in state prison on a previous 99-year sentence for a 1986 first-degree robbery in which he was armed with a handgun. Each of today's sentences – the three for 99 years and the three for 30 years – are to run concurrently with one another. These sentences will, however, be consecutive to the 99 years that he already is serving.

In August, Garth was convicted of three counts of first-degree rape and three counts of first-degree burglary for crimes that occurred between November 1985 and May 1986, two at West Court apartments and one at an apartment on Canal Street in Decatur. The previous conviction was for a burglary that also was committed at West Court apartments.

The current cases involved three victims who were raped in a violent assault during a burglary while Garth was armed with a knife. In two of the cases, the rapes occurred at the victims' homes, and therefore the rape victims were also the victims of the burglaries for which Garth was convicted. In another case, the rape occurred at a home where the victim was babysitting, and so the burglary victim in that case was the resident of that home.

When the crimes were committed nearly 30 years ago, DNA technology did not exist to match evidence from the rape kits to an offender. The Attorney General's Cold Case Unit was able to use modern DNA technology in its new investigation, leading to Garth's indictment on August 3, 2012.

"I am pleased that this vicious criminal received a tough sentence and it is my hope that he will spend the rest of his life in prison," said Attorney General Strange. "With these sentences, we deliver a measure of justice for the victims of these horrendous crimes. I am proud of what our Cold Case Unit has been able to achieve, working with local law enforcement and prosecutors."

The case was investigated by the Attorney General's Cold Case Unit and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Jerry Knight of the Morgan County District Attorney's Office. Attorney General Strange and District Attorney Anderson thanked the Decatur Police Department for its valuable assistance. The Attorney General's Cold Case Unit is a project conducted in partnership with the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, to investigate violent crimes that previously had been closed due to lack of investigative leads. This program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

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