

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES THAT COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS UPHOLDS LEE COUNTY CAPITAL MURDER, ATTEMPTED MURDER, AND ASSAULT CONVICTIONS

(MONTGOMERY)— Attorney General Luther Strange announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals last Friday upheld the capital murder, attempted murder, first-degree assault, and two second-degree assault convictions of Desmonte Demontez Leonard.

Leonard, 26 of Montgomery, was convicted in October of 2014 of the murder of Ladarius Phillips, Ed Christian, and DeMario Pitts (murder made capital because two or more persons were murdered in the course of one act), the attempted murder of Deangelo Benton, the first-degree assault of John Robertson, and the second-degree assault of Xavier Moss and Eric Mack. Two of the men killed, Ed Christian and Ladarius Phillips, were former Auburn University football players.

Evidence was presented at trial regarding actions that occurred on June 9, 2012, during a party at an Auburn apartment complex. During an altercation, Leonard pulled out a gun and shot and killed three men and wounded several others.

The case was prosecuted at trial by Lee County District Attorney Robbie Treese's office. Leonard was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for his capital-murder conviction, life imprisonment for his attempted-murder conviction, 20 years' imprisonment for his first-degree assault conviction, and 10 years' imprisonment for each second-degree assault conviction. He subsequently sought to have his convictions reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Section handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm the convictions. The Court did so in a decision issued on Friday, July 1.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorney General John Porter of the Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Section for his successful work in this case.

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