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**TWO BROTHERS CONVICTED IN 2023 PLATTEKILL MURDER SENTENCED
TO 25 YEARS TO LIFE IN STATE PRISON**

Kingston, NY—On September 17, 2024, Junando Dawkins, age 30, of Newburgh, and his brother, Juwaugh Dawkins, age 34, of Jacksonville, Florida, were sentenced to 25 years to life in state prison by the Honorable Stephan Schick, visiting County Court Judge from Sullivan County. The defendants had been previously convicted following an 11-day jury trial on April 29, 2024, for Murder in the Second Degree and two counts of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the second degree.

In January 2023, a homicide investigation was conducted by the New York State Police, Highland into the death of Daniel Spotards, a 41-year-old father of two, whose body was found at the end of his driveway in the Town of Plattekill on January 2, 2023. A local sanitation worker discovered the body and called 911; the ensuing investigation showed that Mr. Spotards was shot multiple times at close range on January 1, 2023. Town of Plattekill residents also contributed to the investigation by calling law enforcement upon the discovery of discarded cell phones a short distance from the crime.

Defendant Junando Dawkins was then apprehended at Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg) in North Carolina in March of 2023 as he was about to deploy overseas as a Sergeant in the United States Army. Defendant Juwaugh Dawkins fought extradition and was eventually extradited from Florida in June of 2023.

The trial consisted of over forty witnesses, predominantly law enforcement from the New York State Police, as well as law enforcement from the Jacksonville, Florida Sheriff's Office, New York City Police Department, and the Town of Saugerties Police Department, as well as civilian witnesses. Expert witnesses linked the cell phone locations of the defendants to the scene of the crime and State Police divers recovered parts of a Glock semi-automatic pistol from the Hudson River in January 2023 that included DNA from Juwaugh Dawkins.



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At sentencing, the victim's partner and mother of his eight-year-old child spoke, imploring the defendants to think of all the children, including their own, that their crime had impacted. The victim's mother read a victim impact statement from the Daniel Spotards' sixteen-year-old daughter, which described the pain of losing her father and the many important moments he would miss out on. The victim's mother provided a statement and displayed posters including photos of her son with his children.

District Attorney Emmanuel C. Nneji said "I am in awe of the tremendous dedication of the State Police in solving this murder; they searched for a needle in a haystack and found it; they searched by hand the dark and murky bottom of the Hudson River and found evidence that was meant to be lost forever. The shots that killed Daniel Spotards did more than kill him; they took him away from his children and family, and each of the twelve shots pierced the sense of safety and psychological well-being of the community. While I am undoubtedly grateful that we have obtained a verdict that vindicates the dignity of every human life and our laws, I am also mindful and sad about the senseless taking of another life, and the loss of two lives to prison. It is my fervent wish and prayer that our young people will stop the violence, but my office is committed and duty bound to vigorously prosecute crimes of violence without fear or favor whenever they happen."

The speed of this investigation, indictment, and trial is a testament to the tenacious attention to detail and around-the-clock work of our State Police investigators, whose dedication and expertise solved a murder in which the perpetrators had done all that they could to evade detection and arrest. It is also an affirmation that solving violent crimes requires citizens to say something when they see something.

The trial was prosecuted by **District Attorney Emmanuel C. Nneji**. Defendant Juwaugh Dawkins was represented by attorney Merrick Dammar of New York City, and Junando Dawkins was represented by Kingston attorney Thomas K. Petro.

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