



**OFFICE OF THE ULSTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**April 29, 2024**

**TWO BROTHERS CONVICTED OF MURDER FOLLOWING 11-DAY JURY TRIAL IN ULSTER COUNTY COURT**

Kingston, NY—On April 29, 2024, Junando Dawkins, age 30, of Newburgh, and his brother, Juwaugh Dawkins, age 34, of Jacksonville, Florida, were convicted in Ulster County Court of Murder in the Second Degree and two counts of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the second degree.

The verdict follows an 11-day jury trial that started on April 15, 2024, before the Honorable Stephan Schick, visiting County Court Judge from Sullivan County. 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.

Judge Schick charged the jury on the morning of April 29, 2024, and deliberations continued for just shy of three hours. The jury then announced a guilty verdict on all counts for both defendants. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17, 2024. The defendants face up to 25 years to life in State Prison at sentencing.

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



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a Sergeant in the United States Army. Defendant Juwaugh Dawkins fought extradition and was eventually extradited from Florida in June of 2023.

**Captain Joseph Kolek of the New York State Police** said: "I commend our Troop F BCI Investigators and our partners in the Ulster County District Attorney's Office for their tireless efforts to bring justice to the individuals who deliberately took the life of another person. Hopefully these convictions will bring some solace to the grieving loved ones of Mr. Spotards."

**District Attorney Emmanuel C. Nneji** said "Today, an Ulster County jury of eleven women and one man returned a verdict of guilty in a premeditated murder case. Their patience, attention to detail, and courage to serve without fear or favor is a great testament to their commitment to the rule of law. I am eternally grateful to them and to the court. 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 is represented by attorney Merrick Dammar of New York City, and Junando Dawkins is represented by Kingston attorney Thomas K. Petro.

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