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DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CLAYTON JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 2022

Clayton County District Attorney Tasha M. Mosley announces the conviction of Julius Priest.

On August 25, 2022, a Clayton County Jury found Priest (aka “Jig”) guilty of malice murder, two counts of felony murder, aggravated assault, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. During trial, the State showed on October 22, 2018, at 7:01 p.m., Clayton County Police responded to a person shot call at Wilson Road in Clayton County, Georgia. A witness described hearing gunfire and then seeing a black Chevrolet Impala speed away from the scene. Police located William Bonhart’s body lying across Wilson Road. Bonhart had been shot six times and died from his wounds. Bonhart’s family informed police that Bonhart drove a black Chevrolet Impala and provided police with the vehicle’s license plate and VIN. Atlanta Police located Bonhart’s black Impala on fire at an abandoned building in the early morning hours of October 23, 2018.

Clayton County Police Detective Joshua Teske recovered surveillance video from the Woods Motel located roughly one mile from Wilson Road. The surveillance video showed Priest leave with Bonhart in Bonhart’s Impala within 20 minutes of the 911 call. A witness at the Woods Motel overheard Priest’s girlfriend receive a phone call concerning an alleged incident that just occurred between Bonhart and Wells’ 18-year-old daughter. Upon learning this information, Priest was overheard stating he was going to kill Bonhart prior to leaving the motel with Bonhart. A witness testified Priest returned to the Woods Motel to retrieve Wells and stated that it was “done” as police sirens could be heard traveling towards Wilson Road. Priest’s cell phone records showed his cell phone connect with a cell tower near the Woods Motel and Wilson Road at the time of the murder, and then connect with cell towers in Atlanta after the murder. Notably, just 13 minutes before Atlanta Police discovered Bonhart’s burning Impala and ran its license plate, Priest’s cell phone connected with a cell tower in close proximity to the burn site.

On July 26, 2022, Superior Court Judge Robert L. Mack, who presided over the trial, sentenced Priest to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The case was prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Hawkins, Assistant District Attorney La’Porscha Smalls, Investigator James Windon, and Victim Advocate Carla Dixon. Priest has open charges in Clayton County Superior Court for aggravated assault, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm by convicted felon during the commission of a felony for an unrelated shooting that occurred in January 2021.

District Attorney Mosley stated, “*My office continues to work tirelessly on behalf of all Clayton County citizens. Another violent offender is off the streets of our community for good!*”

