



OFFICE OF THE
STATE'S ATTORNEY
CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

JAMES DELLMYER

The State's Attorney for Cecil County, Maryland

Circuit Courthouse • 129 East Main Street, Suite 300 • Elkton, Maryland 21921 • Office: 410-996-5335 • Fax: 410-392-7814

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ELKTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY, NOT CRIMINALLY
RESPONSIBLE IN 2023 SHOOTING OF POLICE OFFICERS**

ELKTON- Today, February 14, 2025, Cecil County Circuit Court Judge Cameron A. Brown found Daniel Padraig Colum Donnelly, 25, of Elkton, guilty of the attempted premeditated murder of two Cecil County Sheriff's Deputies and one Maryland State Trooper. Judge Brown also found Donnelly guilty of two counts of felony burglary that arose from the same incident.

On May 7, 2023, Maryland State Troopers and Cecil County Sheriff's Deputies responded to the area of Hopewell Road and Twin Lakes Drive in Port Deposit, Cecil County, shortly after midnight for a possible burglary in progress. The residents at Hopewell Drive told police that a man walked up and said that his house next door had been broken into and to call 911. Police responded to the Twin Lakes Drive home in question and found that the glass front door had been shattered and the home broken into. Upon further investigation, police found a long-gun case and shotgun ammunition in the backyard, as well as other firearms in the home, but no suspects or residents in or on the property. While searching the rest of the property, police approached the wood line across the street when they saw a person they believed to possibly be a suspect in the burglary. When the officers approached the person, the suspect fired two shots from a twelve-gauge shotgun and struck the three officers. Cecil County Sheriff's Deputies Sean Rickey and Brandon McMillen, along with Maryland State Trooper Seth Billstone, were each struck by shotgun pellets after the suspect fired the shotgun directly at them from approximately fifty feet away. Deputies Rickey and McMillen were both struck by several birdshot pellets from head to toe and Trooper Billstone was struck in his right knee. The three officers were transported to area hospitals for their injuries and, thankfully, later released. No police officers discharged their agency-issued firearms during the incident.

Over the next four hours, a multi-agency investigation spanned the area for the shooter and recovered the shotgun used in the shooting, which was discarded by the suspect at the scene. Authorities arrested the Defendant at the Royal Farms store on Jacob Tome Memorial Highway in Port Deposit, not far from the shooting, after receiving complaints of a suspicious person asking customers for a ride. The Defendant matched the description of the shooter and made incriminating statements during his arrest, stating that he was the one responsible for the shooting. Maryland State Police detectives were later able to interview Donnelly at the North East Barrack. Donnelly stated that he had first broken into the New Life Faith Center on Jacob Tome Memorial Highway before breaking into his acquaintance's house and finding the shotgun and ammunition. Police would later confirm the burglary at the church. Donnelly stated he told the neighbor of the Twin Lake Drive home to call the police, after doing so he then receded into the trees across the street from the house and waited for police to arrive. When the police officers approached him, he intentionally pointed and fired the shotgun at them before dropping the shotgun and running away. Donnelly would go on to tell Detectives that he was under orders from the CIA to "kill westerners," and admitted to lying-in-wait in an attempt to kill the officers.

Donnelly was detained in the Cecil County Detention Center and held without bond after his arrest. Attorneys for Donnelly had immediately filed for his evaluation and competency to stand trial, citing mental health concerns. A District Court judge found Donnelly incompetent to stand trial on May 19, 2023, and he was committed to a state hospital pending further proceedings. Donnelly remained incompetent until January 26, 2024, when the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) found that Donnelly was sufficiently able to understand the nature of the proceedings and assist in his own defense. Donnelly's attorney then filed a plea of Not Criminally Responsible on March 14, 2024. In a report dated September 19, 2024, psychiatrists from MDH found that while Donnelly was now competent to stand trial, he could not be found criminally responsible for the offenses committed in May of 2023. In Maryland and most jurisdictions, defendants cannot be held criminally responsible for their actions if, at the time of the offense, they lacked substantial mental capacity to conform their behavior to the requirements of the law due to a mental disorder. If defendants are found guilty of committing the offense but not criminally responsible, they are committed by court order to the Maryland Department of Health for institutional inpatient care or treatment, instead of being committed to the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. Donnelly had been committed to a Maryland Department hospital since he was initially found incompetent to stand trial and was committed back to MDH as a result of the guilty plea and finding.

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