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OFFICE OF
STATE ATTORNEY
FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

June 2, 2014

PRESS RELEASE (AMENDED)

State Attorney Bill Eddins announced that on May 30, 2014, Phillip Lamar Merriell was found Guilty of Attempted First Degree Felony Murder, Kidnapping with a Firearm, Sexual Battery – Great Force with a Firearm, Guilty of Aggravated Battery with Discharge of a Firearm Causing Great Bodily Harm, and Guilty of Theft of a Motor Vehicle. The Defendant faces a life sentence. Sentencing is set for June 18, 2014 at 1:30 P.M. before the Honorable John T. Brown.

On December 4, 2002, as the Victim left work in Destin, Phillip Merriell severely beat her in the face with a handgun. After beating her with a handgun, he forced the Victim into her car and drove to nearby apartments. Once at the apartments, Phillip Merriell forced the Victim from the car and into his truck. Phillip Merriell then drove around Okaloosa County with the Victim for several hours while holding a handgun in his lap. Early in the morning on December 5, 2002, Phillip Merriell drove the Victim to a secluded area off of Lewis Turner Boulevard and sexually battered the Victim at gun point. He then stated "now I have to kill you" and shot her in the chest. The Victim attempted to escape, however, she was caught and brought back to the truck by Phillip Merriell. He again forced the Victim in the vehicle and drove to Niceville. The Victim was able to escape at the intersection of Highway 85 and College Boulevard. Phillip Merriell was captured several days later in New Hampshire. Physical evidence corroborated the Victim's statement.

The investigation was conducted by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office with assistance from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Assistant State Attorney Jonathan Schlechter prosecuted the case. For more information, please contact Mr. Schlechter at 651-7260.