



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney  
District of Maryland

Rod J. Rosenstein  
United States Attorney

Vickie E. LeDuc  
Public Information Officer

36 S. Charles Street  
Fourth Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692

410-209-4800  
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462  
410-209-4885  
FAX 410-962-3091  
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov

June 21, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/md>

CONTACT AUSA VICKIE E. LEDUC or  
MARCIA MURPHY at (410) 209-4885

**LEEANDER BLAKE CONVICTED OF  
2002 ANNAPOLIS CARJACKING AND MURDER**

*Federal Prosecution Followed State's Unsuccessful Appeal to U.S. Supreme Court*

**Baltimore**, Maryland - A federal jury today convicted Leeander Jerome Blake, age 22, of the Robinwood area in Annapolis, Maryland, of first degree murder, carjacking, conspiracy to possess firearms, and possession and discharge of a firearm in furtherance of a violent crime, related to the carjacking and murder of Straughan Lee Griffin on September 19, 2002, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein said, "When Leeander Blake finally got his day in court, the jury unanimously found him guilty of the brutal carjacking and murder of Straughan Lee Griffin. By demonstrating how local, state and federal authorities in Maryland work together to achieve justice, we hope that this case will deter violent criminals and reassure law-abiding citizens. Mr. Griffin's family and friends, who resolutely sat through many proceedings in state and federal courtrooms, have seen both of his killers brought to justice.

ATF Special Agent in Charge Gregory K. Gant stated, "This verdict is proof that ATF and our law enforcement partners are tirelessly working every day to put violent criminals like Leeander Blake behind bars. This verdict should serve as a reminder to potential offenders, that we will not tolerate these senseless acts of violence, and we will continue to pursue justice for the victims and their families."

Special Agent in Charge (SAC) William D. Chase of the Baltimore Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation stated, "Justice has been served today because Leeander Blake has been held accountable for his participation in the death of Mr. Griffin."

According to the evidence presented at trial, on September 19, 2002, Blake and his neighbor, Terrance Tolbert, carjacked a 2000 Jeep Grand Cherokee owned by Straughan Lee Griffin, age 51, of Annapolis. In the course of the carjacking, which took place in front of Mr. Griffin's home in the Historic District of Annapolis, Mr. Griffin was shot to death in the head and run over by the Jeep Cherokee as they fled. Testimony showed that from September 10 to 20, 2002, Blake conspired with Tolbert to use a gun during the carjacking. In a post-arrest statement on October 26, 2002 while in state custody, Blake admitted to an Annapolis police

officer that he and Mr. Tolbert had planned to commit a carjacking robbery. Blake also admitted that he pointed Mr. Griffin out to Tolbert as a robbery target, but denied that he was the shooter.

The United States Attorney's Office opened a federal investigation in November 2005 after the United States Supreme Court declined to review a pretrial ruling by the Maryland Court of Appeals that Blake's post-arrest statement was inadmissible in state court. Under then-existing state law which has since been changed, the Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office was required to dismiss the murder and carjacking charges against Blake without presenting evidence to a jury. Trial in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County proceeded against Tolbert, who was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, plus 30 years.

Blake faces a maximum sentence of life in prison for the carjacking and murder resulting from the use of a firearm. U.S. District Judge William M. Nickerson scheduled sentencing for August 28, 2007 at 11:30 a.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Annapolis Police Department for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein also thanked the Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office and the Maryland Attorney General's Office for their valuable assistance. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant U.S. Attorneys John Purcell and Michael Hanlon, who are prosecuting the case.