



BCPO News



LaChia L. Bradshaw, Acting Prosecutor

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Defendant Pleads Guilty to Attack During Westampton Home Invasion That Resulted in Elderly Man's Death

Burlington County Prosecutor LaChia L. Bradshaw announced that a 44-year-old Westampton Township man pled guilty to beating his elderly neighbors last summer after breaking into their home, resulting in the death of a 79-year-old man.

Under an agreement with the Prosecutor's Office, Rhys R. Lershe pled guilty on Wednesday to Aggravated Manslaughter (First Degree) and two counts of Robbery (First Degree) in exchange for a 30-year term in New Jersey state prison. Lershe will remain in the Burlington County Jail in Mount Holly until sentencing, which was scheduled for September 15.

The investigation began August 4, 2021 after an elderly couple living next door to Lershe called police at approximately 12:30 a.m. and reported the attack.

The investigation revealed that Lershe entered their residence through a second-story bedroom window and demanded the keys to their 2014 black Kia Optima. He then assaulted the couple before leaving in their car. The victims were transported to Cooper University Hospital in Camden and admitted for treatment.

Lershe was arrested the following day by the Millville Police Department at a residence in Cumberland County. He was still in possession of the stolen vehicle when apprehended.

The initial charges against Lershe were upgraded after one of the victims - 79-year-old Edward Bush - died approximately six weeks after being attacked. An autopsy performed by Burlington County Medical Examiner Dr. Ian Hood determined Bush died as a result of blunt force injuries to his head and chest.

The incident was investigated by the Westampton Township Police Department and the Prosecutor's Office, with assistance from the Moorestown Township Police Department, Mount Laurel Police Department and Willingboro Township Police Department.

END

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