

Commonwealth's Attorney
Colin D. Stolle

Chief Deputies
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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY
CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

Deputies
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Tabitha B. Anderson
Sara R. Chandler
Patrick J. Connolly
Janee D. Joslin
David W. Laird
Paul J. Powers

2425 Nimmo Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-9050

(757) 385-4401
FAX (757) 385-1288
TDD: 711
www.vbgov.com/oca

**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Macie Allen (757) 385-8545
mpallen@vbgov.com

**Commonwealth v. Ronny L. Jernigan
Career Criminal Sentenced to Two Life Terms for Cold Case Sexual Assault, Abduction**

Colin D. Stolle, Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Virginia Beach, announced that Ronny L. Jernigan, 65 years old, was sentenced today for charges of Forcible Sodomy, Abduction with the Intent to Defile, and Robbery. Jernigan was found guilty of these charges after a three-day jury trial on September 1, 2021. Circuit Court Judge James C. Lewis, who presided over the trial, sentenced Jernigan to three (3) life terms in prison with one (1) life term suspended, leaving two (2) life terms to serve.

The Commonwealth's evidence proved that at approximately 8:00 p.m. on November 6, 1992, a 21-year-old woman left Video Express near the intersection of Wesleyan Drive and Newtown Road. As she reached her car, Ronny Jernigan grabbed her from behind, held a knife to her throat, and forced her into the car. While holding the knife in his right hand, Jernigan drove the woman to a dark parking lot nearby. He made her empty her purse and took her driver's license and credit cards. He then made her take her clothes off. He sexually assaulted her, then kicked her out of the car and drove away.

The victim ran to a nearby house for help. A man answered and let her inside to call the police. She then went to the hospital, where forensic evidence was collected as part of a Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK). A detective with the Virginia Beach Police Department took the PERK kit back to the police department, where it was secured until it could be sent out for testing.

In November 2016, a new method of DNA testing created a DNA profile from the 1992 sample. DFS ran this profile through the Virginia and National DNA Databanks. They received notification that the 1992 DNA profile matched the profile of Ronny Jernigan, who was incarcerated in Florida on a robbery charge. Police got a search warrant for Jernigan's DNA and

sent it to DFS for testing. The DNA profile from the victim's PERK kit was a confirmed match to Ronny Jernigan.

Jernigan has a lengthy record dating back to 1975 in multiple states. His prior convictions include Homicide-Manslaughter, Aggravated Assault, Armed Robbery, Attempted Armed Robbery, Robbery (3 counts), Concealed Weapon, Possession of Marijuana, and Larceny.

Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys Michael D. Defricke and Justin M. Brewster prosecuted the case. Please contact Macie Allen if additional information is desired.

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