



Attorney General Doug Peterson

News Release

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Falls City, NE - Today, in Richardson County District Court, Judge Daniel Bryan sentenced Desiderio Hernandez of Falls City to life in prison for First Degree Murder, 5-10 years with a mandatory minimum of 5 years for Use of a Firearm to Commit a Felony, and 3-7 years with a mandatory minimum of 3 years for Possession of a Firearm by a Prohibited Person. These sentences are to be served consecutively. On December 2, 2016 a Richardson County jury found Hernandez guilty of each of these counts following a week-long trial.

According to evidence adduced during the trial, on August 5, 2015, the Falls City Police Department received a 911 emergency call reporting that a person had been shot. A male, identified as Joseph A. Debella, Jr., was found in the basement with a gunshot wound in the head. He was then taken to the Falls City Hospital and later transported to Bryan LGH Hospital in Lincoln via medical helicopter. Debella died on August 13, 2015.

According to witnesses, a loud noise was heard in the basement and Hernandez was observed walking up the stairs and out of the house. Shortly thereafter, Hernandez confessed to both his sister and brother that he had shot Debella. Hernandez's sister and sister-in-law drove to the location of the shooting to check on the victim where they went to the basement and found Debella with a gunshot wound to his head. Hernandez was later apprehended following a prolonged police standoff in Horton, Kansas.

Assistant Attorneys General Corey O'Brien and Jason Bergevin prosecuted the case. The case was investigated by the Nebraska State Patrol, Falls City Police Department, the Horton, Kansas Police Department, and Investigator Bill Black of the Attorney General's Office. Victim Advocate Ellen Reilly also assisted in the matter.

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