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10/04/24

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**COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEVE DESCANO ANNOUNCES
STEPHAN SMERK GUILTY OF KILLING ROBIN LAWRENCE IN 1994 COLD CASE**

Fairfax County, VA — Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano announced today that Stephan Smerk, 52, pled guilty to first-degree murder for stabbing and killing Robin Lawrence in November of 1994.

At a preliminary hearing in April, prosecutors detailed the events that led to the 1994 killing. In November of that year, Smerk, then an Army soldier stationed at what is now Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, left the barracks with the intent to kill someone – though he did not yet know who. Smerk drove to West Springfield and broke into the home of Robin Lawrence, who was not previously known to him. Smerk found Ms. Lawrence and her 2-year-old daughter alone in the home. Smerk proceeded to stab Ms. Lawrence 49 times, tossing the murder weapon into a body of water later that night. Ms. Lawrence's body was discovered by friends on November 20, 1994, after her husband, who was out of the country at the time, asked them to check on her, as he'd not heard from her in several days.

In 2023, Fairfax County Police detectives were able to identify a possible DNA link to Smerk. Detectives approached Smerk in September of 2023 at his Niskayuna, New York home to collect a voluntary DNA sample for further testing. Just a few hours after providing the sample, Smerk turned himself into a local police station and confessed to the crime.

"Thirty years ago, the random and brutal murder of a young mother rocked Fairfax County," CA Descano said. "While the scars of such a horrific crime can never be fully healed, I hope this conviction can provide closure to both the family of Robin Lawrence and our entire community. This conviction is a testament to our commitment to justice – no matter how long it takes to achieve it."

Smerk faces up to 70 years for the first-degree murder charge. A sentencing hearing is set for March 7, 2025.

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