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3/07/25

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**COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEVE DESCANO ANNOUNCES  
STEPHAN SMERK SENTENCED TO 70 YEARS FOR 1994 COLD-CASE MURDER**

Fairfax County, VA — Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano announced today that Stephan Smerk, 53, was sentenced to life, with all but 70 years suspended, for the 1994 cold-case killing of Robin Warr Lawrence.

In November of 1994, Smerk, then an Army soldier stationed at what is now Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, left his barracks with intent to kill someone – though he did not yet know who, according to his confession video. Smerk drove to West Springfield and forced entry into the home of Robin Lawrence, 37, who was not previously known to him. After finding Ms. Lawrence alone in the home with her then 2-year-old daughter, Smerk stabbed her 49 times. 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.

Though blood samples were collected at the scene, the case remained unsolved for nearly three decades, until Fairfax County Police detectives were able to identify a possible DNA link to Smerk using improved forensic genealogy methods. FCPD detectives approached Smerk in September of 2023 at his Niskayuna, New York home to request a voluntary DNA sample for further investigation. Just a few hours after he provided a sample, Smerk turned himself in and confessed to the crime. On October 4, 2024, Smerk pled guilty to first-degree murder.

"The random and senseless murder of a young mother scarred Fairfax County for more than 30 years. The pain left by Robin Lawrence's murder can never fully heal, but I hope that today's sentence will help her loved ones finally close this difficult chapter," said CA Descano. "I also want to thank the Fairfax County cold case unit for their work on this case. While prosecutors always depend on our investigative partners to put together strong cases, older cases have unique challenges, especially if memories have faded and key witnesses are not available."

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