T&D The Times and Democrat

Sunday, November 22, 2026 • A Lee Enterprises, Incorporated Newspaper — Majority shareholder, David Hoffmann, Hoffmann Media Group • TheTandD.com

Orangeburg man pleads guilty in gun case

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A 24-year-old Orangeburg man previously convicted of being an accessory after a teacher's killing has now pleaded guilty to possessing a firearm as a felon, federal prosecutors said Friday.

Aloysius Lee Green Jr. admitted possessing a loaded, stolen 9 mm Beretta handgun while driving a stolen truck and attempting to steal a trailer from a Lexington County business on Sept. 22, the U.S. Attorney's Office in South Carolina said.

U.S. District Judge Mary Geiger Lewis accepted Green's plea Thursday. He remains in federal custody pending sentencing.

Green's criminal record includes a conviction for accessory after the fact to murder in the Dec. 14, 2020, shooting death of Orangeburg teacher Karl Williams. That conviction prohibits him from possessing firearms or ammunition under federal law.

Green was released from custody in May.

According to prosecutors, officers responding to the Lexington County business found the truck running and connected to a trailer by chains. Green fled when police arrived and was apprehended after a brief pursuit by Lexington police officers and Lexington County sheriff's deputies.

The handgun had been reported stolen from Orangeburg County that same night, prosecutors said.

Green admitted driving the stolen truck, attempting to steal the trailer and possessing the stolen gun, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives referred the case to federal prosecutors by 7 a.m. on the day of Green's arrest. A federal magistrate judge issued a criminal complaint and arrest warrant hours later, according to the office.

Prosecutors sought to have Green held without bond. A federal magistrate judge ordered his detention after a hearing.

The U.S. Attorney's Office highlighted the case as an example of its efforts to help local and state agencies refer firearms cases for federal prosecution.

As part of that effort, U.S. Attorney Bryan P. Stirling and members of his office met with Lexington County sheriff's deputies during a shift change to discuss federal firearms prosecutions. The office and ATF have been conducting similar training sessions statewide.

Lewis will sentence Green after reviewing a presentence report prepared by the U.S. Probation Office.

The Lexington Police Department, Lexington County Sheriff's Department and ATF investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Parente is prosecuting it.

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MURDAUGH INDICTMENTS UPHELD



USA TODAY NETWORK

Alex Murdaugh, at right, confers with attorney Jim Griffin.

Retrial set for April 2027 in Sumter County

USA TODAY NETWORK

A South Carolina judge has upheld a pair of murder indictments against disgraced former Hampton lawyer Alex Murdaugh, and the case will proceed toward a 2027 retrial.

After hearing arguments on a motion to dismiss from Murdaugh's attorneys and the S.C. Attorney General's Office for nearly two hours during a pretrial hearing in Lexington on Nov. 13, Judge Debra McCaslin ruled Friday, Nov. 20, that Murdaugh's motion to dismiss murder and weapons charges be denied.

While Murdaugh's defense attorneys argued in that motion that the lead state investigator in the case, David Owen, presented false or misleading evidence to a local grand jury in order to secure the 2022 indictments, Judge McCaslin ruled that "the remaining unchallenged evidence overwhelmingly established probable cause."

Murdaugh was convicted in March 2023 for the June 2021 shooting deaths of his wife Maggie and adult son Paul, but the convictions and resulting two consecutive life sentences were overturned by the S.C. Supreme Court in May over reports of improper jury contact by now-former Colleton County Clerk of Court Rebecca Hill.

Murdaugh, who is currently serving lengthy state and federal prison sentences for fraud, has admitted to stealing millions from clients and law partners, but has staunchly denied playing a role in the family killings.

Why did Judge McCaslin uphold the Murdaugh murder charges?

The alleged false evidence relates to allegations that, in order to obtain the murder indictments, S.C. Law Enforcement Division agent Owen gave false testimony to the Colleton County Grand Jury related to human blood spatter evidence on a shirt Murdaugh was wearing on the night of the killings, as well as false or misleading information about shotgun ammunition patterns that matched one of the missing murder weapons.

However, in the concluding remarks of her 11-page order, Judge McCaslin writes:

"The Court concludes that Defendant has not established intentional prosecutorial or investigative misconduct that compromised the integrity of the grand jury proceedings. Defendant has not demonstrated that the challenged testimony substantially influenced the grand jury's decision to indict or created grave doubt that the decision was free from such influence. Even if the challenged testimony concerning the blood spatter on the T-shirt and shotgun ammunition were excluded from consideration by the grand jury, the remaining unchallenged evidence overwhelmingly established probable cause. Further, the Court finds no evidence of misuse of the State Grand Jury."

In citing her "probable cause" decision, Judge McCaslin cited several other pieces of evidence that were arguably enough to secure an indictment, including "digital timeline records, FBI telemetry analysis, cell phone data, video evidence placing the Defendant at the scene immediately before the homicides, evidence of GSR on the Defendant's raincoat, and circumstantial evidence regarding motive and opportunity," etc.

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