

DeKalb double murder sent to grand jury

Suspect, 34, remains jailed

STEVEN GAMBLE
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — A grand jury will determine if there is sufficient evidence to indict a Houston man charged with capital murder in the shooting deaths of a state correctional officer and his friend.

Clyde Allen Stephens II, 34, made his first appearance in court Monday before Judge John Tidwell in Bowie County's 202nd District Court. He is charged in the June 19 killings of Charles Beckham and Donna Culpepper at Beckham's home in the 700 block of Private Road 42041 in DeKalb, Texas.

Several relatives and friends of Beckham and Culpepper attended the hearing.

As Stephens stood silently before the court with his attorney, Jeff Harrelson, First Assistant District Attorney Kelley Crisp said it is unlikely a capital murder case could be resolved through a hearing. She requested the case immediately be sent to a grand jury, adding that Harrelson agreed.

Tidwell granted Crisp's request. A grand jury is expected to hear the case in August.

Tidwell also ordered Crisp to report the grand jury's findings to the court. If the panel finds there is enough evidence to indict Stephens, the court will schedule an arraignment.

Stephens is believed to have shot Beckham several times as Beckham returned



home after completing his shift at 3:30 a.m. at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Johnson Unit in Winnboro. Beckham interrupted Stephens as he was burglarizing his home, according to Bowie County Sheriff's Office.

Culpepper was killed sometime later as she reportedly arrived at Beckham's home to jointly run errands.

Clyde Allen Stephens II, left, listens to Judge John Tidwell as attorney Jeff Harrelson looks at his client during a hearing in Bowie County's 202nd District Court on Monday at Bi-State Justice Building in Texarkana, Texas. Stephens is charged with capital murder in the June 19 shooting deaths of Charles Beckham and Donna Culpepper. (Staff photo by Stevon Gamble)

"It certainly appears there's no connection between the suspect and the victims," Bowie County Sheriff Jeff Neal has said. "There's nothing that predicated the offense that will lead us to believe that they knew each other, (that) there was some

kind of connection."

Stephens also is charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle. He was arrested June 23 in White County, Arkansas, after a brief pursuit by White County Sheriff's Office.

Stephens allegedly was driving a gray 2025 Nissan Sentra that Culpepper had rented. He is believed to have stolen the vehicle to flee the scene of the killings.

Stephens has relatives in White County, so White County Sheriff's Office was asked to assist in the search.

White County had charged Stephens with theft by receiving and fleeing. He was extradited to Bowie County on July 2.

Stephens remains in Bi-State Detention Center on a \$3.1 million bail.



Maya Olson comes up for a breath during a butterfly workout Monday at the Texarkana Independent School District Aquatic Center at Texarkana College. Olson and other members of the Area Texarkana Aquatic Club have a full weekend of competition. The Thunder Turtles will travel to Arkadelphia, Arkansas, on Saturday for summer championships, coach Eric Vogan said. On Sunday, the squad heads to Houston for the AAU Junior Olympic Games. The competition will be July 22-27 at the Cy-Fair Natatorium. (Staff photos by Stevon Gamble)

Thunder Turtles are bound for Junior Olympics

Gunnar Taylor trains in the freestyle during an Area Texarkana Aquatic Club workout Monday at the Texarkana Independent School District Aquatic Center at Texarkana College. The Thunder Turtles will compete in a summer championship Saturday in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and then head south for the weeklong AAU Junior Olympic Games in Houston.



Judge orders removal of defendant's GPS device

Case reset for August

GAZETTE STAFF

TEXARKANA, Texas — The defendant in the alleged assault of a Central Mall employee had his GPS monitoring device removed during a pretrial hearing Monday at Bi-State Justice Building.

Daniel Lynn Thomas, 40, of Texarkana, Arkansas, appeared before Bowie County's 202nd District Judge John Tidwell. Tidwell ordered the device removal after a request from Thomas' attorney Jeff Harrelson.

Thomas will have his next pretrial hearing Aug. 11. A trial date is set for Aug. 26, according to court documents.

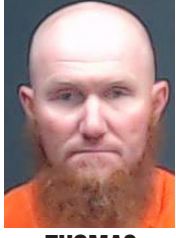
Thomas was arrested by Texarkana Texas Police Department in January 2024 on a charge of aggravated assault causing serious bodily injury. He posted bond on \$150,000 bail and was released the same day, according to jail records.

Thomas was indicted in March 2024, according to court records.

On Jan. 20, 2024 TTPD officers were dispatched to Central Mall, where they discovered Richard "Jay" Houff with severe facial trauma.

Officers learned that a female Central Mall employee had earlier reprimanded two unsupervised teenage boys who were horseplaying with a rentable stroller for children. When the employee asked the teens to stop playing, they reportedly became verbally abusive.

Houff reportedly intervened and asked



THOMAS

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Arkansas could face rural hospital failures

Two-thirds are seen at risk

NATHAN ANSELL
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

As providers brace for Medicaid changes from the federal "One Big, Beautiful Bill Act," recently published estimates show that nearly two-thirds of rural Arkansas hospitals were at risk of closure within six or seven years even before the megabill was signed into law.

The Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform's latest analysis, published prior to the bill's passage this month and using hospitals' cost reports updated as of June, indicated 30 of the state's 47 rural hospitals (64%) with inpatient services were at risk of shutting down due to losses on patient services that couldn't be offset by financial reserves for more than six to seven years — up from 20 "at risk" hospitals

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ANALYSIS

More than 20 states sue government over frozen after-school and summer funding

BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS
AP EDUCATION WRITER

EAST PROVIDENCE, R.I. — More than 20 states sued President Donald Trump's administration on Monday over billions of dollars in frozen education funding for after-school care, summer programs and more.

Some of the withheld money funds after-school and summer programming at Boys & Girls Clubs, the YMCA or public schools, attended by 1.4 million children and teenagers nationwide. Congress set aside money for the programs to provide academic support, enrichment and child care to mostly low-income families. But Trump's administration recently froze the funding, saying it wants to ensure programs align

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Girls read an Amelia Bedelia book during the East Providence Boys and Girls Club Summer Camp at Emma G. Whiteknact Elementary School on Thursday in Providence R.I. (AP photo/Sophie Park)