

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Waleska Man Sentenced to 30 Years for Shooting Gun at Law Enforcement Officer**  
**State vs. Joseph Donaldson**

**October 23, 2019** – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Waleska resident Joseph Leon Donaldson, 38, has pled guilty to shooting at a Cherokee Sheriff’s Office deputy and eluding law enforcement during a high-speed police chase in 2018.

The non-negotiated plea took place just before the parties were scheduled to begin jury selection on the morning of October 21. Donaldson pled guilty to three counts of aggravated assault on a police officer, fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, obstruction of an officer, and discharging of a gun near a highway or street.

The incident began at 3:50 a.m. on August 23, 2018 when Donaldson refused to pull over for a CSO deputy in Waleska then drove his Chevy Blazer at speeds that reached up to 90 mph, weaving back and forth across the roadway.

While traveling north on Salacoa Road, Donaldson discharged a 9mm pistol at a CSO patrol car, firing approximately 13-15 shots. Donaldson then escaped into Pickens County, where he hid his Chevy Blazer. Hours later, law enforcement officers located Donaldson in a Dodge pickup truck in Pickens County, where he was arrested.

At the hearing before Cherokee County Judge Anthony Baker, the law enforcement officer involved in the incident testified that, while police are faced with dangers every day, no officer should be shot at just for doing his job.

“Luckily Deputy Harris was able to go home to his wife and his family after the incident. This wasn’t one shot, two shots, three shots. This defendant unloaded a barrage of bullets at this officer,” said Assistant District Attorney Robert Fickett, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. “This sentence reflects our community’s position that people who endanger our law enforcement officers by engaging in such violent acts will be held accountable.”

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Baker addressed the defendant, saying that his actions were “egregious” and he was lucky he didn’t injure himself or someone else. He advised the defendant to get a GED and drug counseling while he was behind bars. He then sentenced Mr. Donaldson to 30 years, with 13 years to serve in the state penal system.

“Every day and every night on the streets of Cherokee County, our police officers put their lives in danger to protect and serve the citizens of our county. I am immensely thankful for their bravery,” said District Attorney

Shannon Wallace. “Nationally, we’ve seen too many police officers senselessly killed in the line of duty by actions just like those of Mr. Donaldson. This office simply will not tolerate anyone endangering the lives of our police officers in Cherokee County.”

*The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.*

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