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Willingboro Man Pleads Guilty to Aggravated Manslaughter

A Willingboro man charged with the April 2016 shooting death of Elliot Simon Jr. pleaded guilty this week to aggravated manslaughter, Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri announced.

Virgil R. Howard, 29, of Ebbtine Lane, pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree aggravated manslaughter before Mercer County Superior Court Judge Thomas M. Brown on January 13. Under the terms of the plea agreement, the state will recommend that Howard be sentenced to 23 years in state prison under the No Early Release Act.

The guilty plea is a result of an investigation conducted by the Mercer County Homicide Task Force. On April 8, 2016, at approximately 9:08 p.m., Trenton police responded to the area of 37-49 N. Hermitage Avenue after the ShotSpotter system detected gunshots. Upon arrival, police found 52-year-old Simon in Boudinot Street suffering from gunshot wounds to the chest. The victim was transported to Capital Health Regional Medical Center where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

Assistant Prosecutor Kathleen Petrucci, chief of the Homicide Task Force, represented the state. Howard is scheduled to be sentenced on March 13.

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