

Sentence Review Division  
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SENTENCE REVIEW DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

STATE OF MONTANA,	)	Cause No. DC-16-016-IN
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	Missoula County District Court
	)	
-vs-	)	Montana Fourth Judicial District
	)	
SARAH RAE MCKNIGHT,	)	<b>DECISION</b>
	)	
Defendant.	)	

On December 12, 2016, the Defendant was sentenced as follows:

Count I: Life Commitment to the Montana Women’s Prison, for the offense of Conspiracy to Commit Aggravated Kidnapping, a Felony, in violation of §45-5-303 and §45-4-102, MCA.

Count II: Life Commitment to the Montana Women’s Prison, for the offense of Accountability for Attempted Deliberate Homicide, a Felony, in violation of §45-5-102[1], §45-4-103 and §45-2-301, MCA.

Count III: Life Commitment to the Montana Women’s Prison, for the offense of Deliberate Homicide, a Felony, in violation of §45-5-102, MCA.

Count IV: Ten (10) year Commitment to the Montana Women’s Prison, for the offense of Tampering with or Fabricating Physical Evidence, a Felony, in violation of §45-7-207, MCA.

Count V: Ten (10) year Commitment to the Montana Women’s Prison, for the offense of Theft, a Felony, in violation of §45-6-301 [4], MCA.

Counts I and II were ordered to run concurrently with each other. Counts III, IV, and V were ordered to run concurrently with each other but consecutive to Counts I and II.

Defendant received 356 days credit for time served. The Defendant was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$4,214.63, joint and several with the Co-Defendant, including the 10% (\$421) administrative fee.

On April 5, 2024, the Defendant's Application for review of that sentence came on for hearing by Zoom videoconference before the Sentence Review Division of the Montana Supreme Court (hereafter “the Division”). The Defendant appeared from the Montana Women’s Prison and was represented by Sadie Busch, Defense Counsel. The State was not represented. The Defendant

provided a statement. Shannon Bender, mother of Defendant, was present but did not provide a statement. David Keehner, widower of victim, and Nicole Walks Along, daughter of victim, were present and provided statements. Cathy Dorle, former Victim/Witness Coordinator was present but did not provide a statement.

Before hearing the Application, the Defendant was advised that the Division has the authority not only to reduce the sentence or affirm it, but also increase it. The Defendant was further advised that there is no appeal from a decision of the Division. The Defendant acknowledged that she understood this and stated that she wished to proceed.

Rule 12, Rules of the Sentence Review Division of the Supreme Court of Montana, provides that, "The sentence imposed by the District Court is presumed correct. The sentence shall not be reduced or increased unless it is clearly inadequate or clearly excessive." (Section 46-18-904(3), MCA).

The Division finds that the reasons advanced for modification are insufficient to hold that the sentence imposed by the District Court is clearly inadequate or clearly excessive.

Therefore, it is the unanimous decision of the Division that the sentence is AFFIRMED.

DATED this 30th day of April, 2024.

SENTENCE REVIEW DIVISION



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Hon. Luke Berger, Chair



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Hon. Matthew Cuffe, Member



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Hon. Jessica Fehr, Member

Copies mailed or emailed this 15<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2024, to:

Clerk of District Court – *via email*

Sarah Rae McKnight #3018794, Defendant

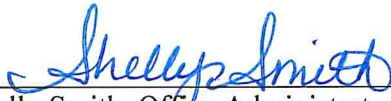
Hon. Robert Deschamps – *via email*

Sadie Busch, Defense Counsel – *via email*

State Office of the Public Defender Kirsten Pabst, Esq. – *via email*

Board of Pardons and Parole – *via email*

MWP - Records Dept. – *via email*



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Shelly Smith, Office Administrator  
Sentence Review Division