

Suspect goes on trial in robbery, murder of armored truck guard

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DETROIT -- One of six men charged in the 2001 robbery and slaying of an armored truck guard in Dearborn went on trial in federal court today.

Earl L. Johnson, 40, of Detroit, a former assembly line worker at Ford Motor Co. is accused of organizing the robbery and recruiting other participants, but not of firing one of the shots that killed Norman "Anthony" Stephens, also of Detroit, early in the morning of Dec. 14, 2001.

Unlike three of the men charged in the case - Norman Herbert Duncan, Timothy Dennis O'Reilly, and Kevin C. Watson - **Johnson** is not facing a possible federal death penalty if convicted.

Shotgun blasts killed Stephens, a husband and father who was filling ATM machines at the Dearborn Federal Credit Union when a gang of armed robbers ambushed him and made off with \$204,000 in cash.

Johnson carried a pistol that morning and grabbed one of the bags of cash, Assistant U.S. Attorney David Gardey said in his opening statement.

"These men were going to use violence, raw fear and bullets to get what they wanted," Gardey told a jury of seven men and six women. "They were motivated by one thing - greed."

James Feinberg, **Johnson**'s Detroit attorney, said **Johnson** is wrongly accused and government witnesses who will testify in the case are motivated by promises of reduced sentences.

Johnson had a cast on his foot at the time of the robbery that made it impossible for him to run, drive a car or climb stairs, Feinberg told jurors.

Gardey said a key piece of evidence in the case will be a tape recording secretly made in 2004 in the exercise yard at Ryan Correctional Facility, where O'Reilly admitted to another inmate his own role in the robbery-killing and implicated **Johnson** and others.

The trial before U.S. District Judge Victoria A. Roberts is expected to last about one week.

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