

Prosecution rests in murder trial of Ahmaud Arbery's killers

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State prosecutors in the murder trial of Ahmaud Arbery's killers rested their case Tuesday after calling 23 witnesses over eight days of testimony.

Gregory McMichael, 67, his son Travis McMichael, 35, and their neighbor William "Roddie" Bryan, 52, three white men, are accused of chasing down and fatally shooting Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old black man, last February in the Satilla Shores neighborhood just outside Brunswick, Georgia. They each face charges of murder, aggravated assault and false imprisonment, which could bring them life in prison if convicted. All three have pleaded not guilty.

The state called several experts from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) on Tuesday to explain the evidence stacked against the defendants.

Assistant Special Agent in Charge Richard Dial, the lead GBI investigator in the case, testified on the timeline of events leading up to Arbery's death. State attorneys presented maps showing where Arbery and the defendants traveled on the day of the shooting, and Dial walked jurors through drone footage as it played in court.

GBI forensic pathologist Dr. Edmund Donoghue, the man who performed Arbery's autopsy in April 2020, detailed his injuries and cause of death. Donoghue's original autopsy did not detail the order in which Arbery's gunshot wounds happened. However, after viewing a cell phone video captured by Bryan, Donoghue testified he could provide a better account of the shooting.

Arbery can be seen wrestling with Travis McMichael, who was armed with a shotgun, before three shots are heard. According to Donoghue, the first shot grazed Arbery's wrist, severing an artery and causing severe bleeding, and then struck him in the center of the chest. The second shot missed, but the third struck him in his

left chest, hitting his axillary vein and axillary artery. Nothing could be done to save Arbery's life after either of the torso injuries, Donoghue testified.

The final shot effectively paralyzed Arbery's left arm because it injured a complex of nerves. Donoghue pointed to a video of his hand, which had rotated to a position that indicates "Erb's Palsy," the type of nerve injury Donoghue said Arbery suffered.

State attorney Linda Dunikoski asked Donoghue if Arbery's injuries could be "consistent with someone pushing a shotgun away from them" or "consistent with someone maybe grabbing the shotgun."

"It could be, yes," Donoghue replied to both questions.

Donoghue's original autopsy estimated Arbery's body was 3 to 4 feet away from the gun when he was shot. With the knowledge of the video, Donoghue said he now believes the distance was 3 to 20 inches, or "close-range to near-contact." This follows testimony from Monday, when a firearms examiner testified Arbery was shot at close range.

The autopsy report, which lists the manner of death as "homicide," showed Arbery died of multiple shotgun wounds sustained during a struggle for the shotgun. Thirteen shotgun pellets exited Arbery's back, and 11 more were recovered from his wounds.

When cross-examining Donoghue, the defense team attempted to portray the McMichaels as being in immediate danger. After being shown still frames taken from the video, Donoghue testified he could see Arbery's hand on the shotgun. Furthermore, Arbery was able to hold onto the gun with one hand after the first shot wounded him, he testified.

But the events leading up to Arbery's slaying contradict this narrative.

After they spotted him running in their neighborhood,

the McMichaels grabbed their guns, got into their pickup truck and chased Arbery for more than four minutes. Bryan joined the chase with his own vehicle, while recording the incident. Prosecutors state he struck Arbery with his vehicle during the pursuit and the men “trapped him like a rat” with their trucks.

The defense has maintained that the McMichaels and Bryan suspected that Arbery was responsible for a string of burglaries and were trying to perform a “citizen’s arrest,” detaining Arbery until police arrived. Travis McMichael was only forced to shoot in self-defense, they claimed.



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