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From: Thomas R. Stanton, Reno County District Attorney
State v. Kyle Hardwick – 21 CR 638 – Press Release

On August 27, 2021, deputies from the Reno County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to 1016 N. Palomino Trail in Reno County based on information they received regarding the owners of that property. Upon arrival at the scene, deputies spoke to three witnesses present at the property who were concerned because they had been unable to contact Marion Edward Bates or Phil D. Anstine since the evening of August 25, 2021. Concerned for the welfare of the two men, deputies began to search the property, at which time they discovered a body in a shallow, mostly dry, pond on the property that had been covered by tree branches. A further check of the property resulted in the discovery of the badly burned and charred remains of a body in a burn pit that had been covered by a pallet and metal sheeting.

Detectives of the Reno County Sheriff's Office obtained a search warrant for the property which was executed on August 28, 2021. The officers recovered the body from the shallow, mostly dry, pond. Detectives also retrieved the body from the fire pit, along with the remains of a shotgun consisting of a burn barrel and other items in the burn pit. Law enforcement officers were assisted in the recovery of the bodies by Dr. Scott Kipper, a forensic pathologist, and an employee of the Reno County District Attorney's Office who acts as an assistant to Dr. Kipper. This body removed from the shallow, mostly dry, pond was later identified through DNA analysis as Marion Edward Bates. The body removed from the burn pit was later identified through DNA analysis as Phillip D. Anstine. Autopsies performed on the two men determined they were killed by a shotgun, and the manner of death was determined to be homicide.

Subsequent investigation led to the arrest of Kyle V. Hardwick. Formal charges of premeditated intentional murder of each victim and two alternative counts of theft were filed in Reno County District Court by the Reno County District Attorney's Office. A count of solicitation to commit perjury was added to the complaint after a May 19, 2022, telephone conversation during which it was alleged that the defendant attempted to solicit perjury from a witness.

A jury trial commenced on the complaint on January 24, 2023. The Reno County District Attorney's Office called approximately 60 witnesses and submitted more than 130 exhibits during the trial. The defendant claimed at trial that he had killed Ed Bates and Phil Anstine in self-defense. The presentation of evidence concluded on February 1, 2023, closing statements were made to the jury, and the jury began its deliberations at approximately 2 PM to consider its verdict and ending the first day of deliberations at 5 PM. The jury returned with a verdict at approximately 10:45 AM on February 2, 2023. The jury delivered a verdict in the case, finding the defendant guilty of premeditated intentional first-degree murder of Ed Bates, guilty of premeditated intentional first-degree murder of Phil Anstine, guilty of both alternative counts of theft, and guilty of solicitation to commit perjury. The court has set sentencing for April 7, 2023, at 1:30 PM.

The Reno County District Attorney's Office wishes to thank the deputies and detectives of the Reno County Sheriff's Office, the scientists at the Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center, Maize Police Department, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office, the agents and scientists at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the United States Secret Service, the citizens who testified in this case, the dedication of the staff of the Reno County District Attorney's Office, and the families of the victims for their support in the prosecution of this case. We also wish to thank the dedication of fourteen Reno County citizens for their diligence and sacrifice in sitting on the jury during this case. I believe justice has been done for the victims in this case and for their families. ###