



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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**OAHU MAN PLEADS GUILTY AND RECEIVES SENTENCE IN COLD CASE**

HONOLULU – Melvin Kumukau, 52, pled guilty and was sentenced today for the 1977 shooting of Toshio Kawano.

Kawano, 58, and his wife had operated for many years a small bakery and liquor store on King Street. On the evening of September 26, 1977, Kawano was tending the store alone when he was shot several times during what appeared to be a robbery attempt. Kawano died during surgery a few hours later. There were no eyewitnesses to the shooting, and after an exhaustive investigation, the case was eventually classified as an unsolved homicide.

In 2004, the case was adopted for further investigation by the Cold Case Unit of the Department of the Attorney General. On December 14, 2006, the department obtained murder indictments against Kumukau and co-defendant Aaron Meyer, 49.

Pursuant to a plea agreement, Kumukau pled guilty today to the charges of Manslaughter and Robbery in the First Degree, and was sentenced immediately by Judge Virginia Crandall to an indeterminate ten-year prison term for Manslaughter and an indeterminate twenty-year prison term for Robbery in the First Degree.

“I would like to express again my sympathy to Mr. Kawano’s family for their tragic loss,” Attorney General Mark Bennett said. “I am glad that we were able to bring a portion of this case to a close after so many years. Cold cases are very difficult to prosecute, and given the age of this case, a twenty-year sentence is a just resolution.”

The trial of co-defendant Meyer is scheduled for 2009. Meyer is considered innocent unless and until he is found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt by a judge or jury.

The Cold Case Unit was established in 2004 to investigate and prosecute cold homicide cases throughout Hawaii and to develop a statewide, coordinated approach to cold homicide investigations. “We will continue to work with law enforcement agencies in every county and at all levels of government to bring justice and closure in unsolved ‘cold’ homicide cases,” Bennett said.

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