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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—STATE V. JOSEPH MESA

An Austin County jury took 90 minutes on January 28, 2026 to convict Joseph Mesa, a Sealy man, of seven felony offenses after a week-long trial in Bellville. The trial was temporarily suspended on Monday, January 26, 2026, due to the ice storm.

After a punishment hearing, Judge Steinhauser sentenced Mesa to 5 Life Sentences for Aggravated Robbery, Aggravated Assault with Deadly Weapon, Aggravated Kidnapping, and the two Burglary of a Habitation convictions. Judge Steinhauser also handed down a 20-year sentence for Deadly Conduct and a 10-year sentence for Theft of a Firearm. These were the maximum prison terms allowed by law in each of Mesa's 7 cases.

Austin County District Attorney Brandy Robinson and Assistant DA Kacie Murphy presented the cases with assistance from Felony Legal Assistant Lisa Tobola.

The State presented 29 witnesses and dozens of exhibits including photographs, videos, and physical evidence throughout the course of the trial.

Bellville Defense Attorney Calvin Garvie represented Mesa.

The State's evidence showed that Mesa's nine-hour crime spree started the morning of April 09, 2024 when he kidnapped an adult female associate as she was driving him to court in Bellville on an unrelated criminal charge.

Sealy Police Department first began looking for Mesa when the woman was reported missing by concerned family members that morning.

Mesa threw out their phones and an I-pad before pulling a gun on the woman. When the woman tried to run from the car, Mesa shot at her, hit her with the firearm, and dragged her back to the vehicle.

Mesa ultimately got the car stuck in a creek bed off a dirt road between Cat Spring and Bellville. The woman tried to escape again but was unsuccessful.

Mesa and his captive wandered hours in the woods before eventually stumbling on the residence of a retired Austin County jailer and his wife. Luckily, the couple were not home at the time. Mesa stole a pistol from the residence and attempted to steal the owner's vehicle but could not locate the truck's keys.

Mesa next led the kidnapping victim to a neighboring house. There, he confronted the lone female resident of that home and robbed her at gunpoint.

While Mesa was distracted by the female homeowner, the kidnapped female took the opportunity to escape. She found the homeowner's car keys and threw them into the grass where Mesa could not find them.

The kidnapping victim fled through the woods for about a mile until she found safety with the owners of another property.

The victim then called a Sealy day care and 911 to warn them that Mesa may be travelling with a gun to the day care where his children were located.

Mesa then stood in the highway near the Millheim Hall and attempted to carjack passing motorists by firing several shots.

One driver attempted to block the road and warned off other vehicles, including a school bus.

At some point before his capture, Mesa shot himself in the leg.

Austin County Sheriff's Office Deputy Erwin Buitron-Solares and off-duty Constable Lance Johnson arrived within minutes of the 911 calls and placed Mesa into custody at about 5 pm. Sealy Police Department Investigator Amanda Leal responded quickly to the scene to assist the kidnapping victim.

Austin County EMS treated all injuries.

Defense attorney Calvin Garvie argued a case of mistaken identity for some of Mesa's criminal charges and self-defense in others. The jury rejected those defenses and convicted Mesa on all 7 charges.

In the sentencing hearing, the State presented evidence that Mesa received an eight-year TDC sentence in 2007 for two charges of Assault on a Peace Officer and one charge of Aggravated Assault on a Peace Officer with a deadly weapon in Austin, Texas.

Evidence further showed that Mesa damaged Austin County Jail property while in custody, committed an assault against another jail inmate, and made threats against public officials while he was awaiting trial.

The defense presented expert psychological testimony and testimony from Mesa's family members who described Mesa's childhood hardships.

When pronouncing the maximum sentence, District Judge Steinhauser expressed surprise that no one—including Mesa—was killed during this crime spree.

District Attorney Brandy Robinson thanked all the agencies, court security, and first responders involved in the case and expressed gratitude for the jury's verdict.

"Joseph Mesa earned every day of his prison sentences with the choices he made that day," Robinson stated.

"The Austin County Sheriff's Office deputies, Sealy Police Department officers, and Austin County EMS staff should be commended for responding swiftly and professionally to a very dangerous crime scene."

"I'm also tremendously grateful to ADA Kacie Murphy and Legal Assistant Lisa Tobola," Robinson added.

"Kacie Murphy joined my office this year and has been a powerful addition to our felony trial team."

Joseph Mesa will not be eligible for parole until 2053 when he is 65 years old. Even then, the severity and number of his convictions should weigh heavily against his release on parole.

"The jury's verdict—and Judge Steinhauser's sentence—will ensure that Austin County and surrounding communities will be safe from Joseph Mesa for a long time to come," ADA Kacie Murphy said.