

News

White Ex-Cop to Remain Free on Bail After Federal Indictment in Shooting

Michael Slager, 34, charged in connection with the killing of unarmed Black motorist Walter Scott

By *Bruce Smith and Meg Kinnard*
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — As federal charges were filed against a white former South Carolina police officer who already faced a state murder charge in the shooting death of unarmed black motorist Walter Scott, Scott's lawyer and family

praised the federal prosecutors for pressing the case.

"I think the Justice Department is tired of sitting on the sidelines and they think this is one they can definitely win and send a message to police departments around the country," attorney Chris Stewart told The Associated Press.

A federal indictment

unsealed Wednesday charges Michael Slager, 34, with depriving Scott of his civil rights.

During a hearing Wednesday, federal Magistrate Judge Bristol Marchant agreed that Slager could remain free on the bond he has already posted in state court.

The federal indictment unsealed a few hours ear-

lier also charges Slager with obstruction of justice and unlawful use of a weapon during the commission of a crime in the death of 50-year-old Scott.

Slager, who wore a dark suit and was handcuffed, entered a not-guilty plea during the brief hearing. Although he doesn't have to put up any additional bond on the federal



Anthony Scott, the brother of Walter Scott who was shot and killed while fleeing a traffic stop in April, 2015, speaks to reporters outside the federal courthouse in Charleston, S.C., Wednesday, May 11, 2016. At right is the Scott family attorney Chris Stewart. Prosecutors on Wednesday unsealed a federal indictment charging white, former police officer Michael Slager with three federal counts in the death of Scott. Slager already faces a murder charge in state court.

charges, Slager must surrender his passport and have GPS monitoring.

A bystander's cell-phone video captured images of Slager, then a North Charleston police officer, firing eight times while Scott ran from a traffic stop in April 2015. The case inflamed a national

debate about how blacks are treated by white police officers. but Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Klumb said the government is seeking a maximum of life because there are no aggravating circumstances in the case.

Stewart, who represents the Scott family, called it amazing that after all the cases over the

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debate about how blacks are treated by white police officers.

The federal indictment charges that Slager, while acting as a law officer, deprived Scott of his civil rights.

A second count says he used a weapon, a Glock Model 21 .45-caliber pistol, while doing so.

The third count, charging obstruction of justice, alleges that Slager intentionally misled agents of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division about what happened during the encounter with Scott.

"Specifically, defendant Michael Slager knowingly misled SLED investigators by falsely stating that he fired his weapon at Scott while Scott was coming forward at him with a Taser," the indictment reads. "In truth and in fact, as defendant Michael Slager then well knew, he repeatedly fired his weapon at Scott when Scott was running away from him."

Conviction on all the charges could mean a sentence for Slager of life plus 30 years and a \$750,000 fine. The charge of depriving Scott of his civil rights can carry the death penalty, because Scott lost his life,

past 20 years the federal government has decided to indict an officer.

Later, he told reporters outside the courthouse that he was proud of the Justice Department's decision.

"This is a message — not to the good officers who protect us every day, but to the ones who abuse people in this country," he said.

Scott's mother Judy Scott said she thanks God for justice.

"I'm happy for that, but I'm sad because my son is gone. I'll never see him again. But I pray that other mothers don't have to go through what I've been going through," she said.

Slager, who was fired from the police force after the incident, was held in solitary confinement until January, when he was released on half a million dollars bail and put under house arrest. He is at an undisclosed location, allowed to leave only for work, church and medical or legal appointments.

Slager's state trial is set to begin this fall, and he faces a possible life sentence without parole.

North Charleston has settled with Scott's family for \$6.5 million.

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