

Sentence modified for armed robber

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Mikal Dennard Barnes

Leonardtown, MD -- The sentence has been modified for one of the two men convicted of the 2005 armed robbery of the Belk Department Store in California.

Mikal Barnes, 45, of Fort Washington was sentenced to 20 years in jail in connection with the incident in which he and another man entered the department store in the Wildewood Shopping Center, confronted two female employees in an office, put a knife to the throat of one and demanded money. They fled in a car and were apprehended by police in Charles County after a vehicle and foot chase.

During a Jan. 8 motions hearing before St. Mary's County Circuit Court Judge Michael Stamm, Barnes' sentence was changed to authority under Maryland's "Health General" article, which means that his supervision was transferred from the penal system to the state health department. The change allowed Barnes to be admitted into the Jude House in Charles County for a residential drug treatment program. Once he completes that he could be released from active incarceration.

Assistant State's Attorney Joseph Stanalonis agreed to the sentence modification at the hearing. The judge reduced a companion concurrent eight-year sentence in connection with the same incident to eight years of supervised probation. Stanalonis told The BayNet that Barnes still will have that additional back-up time hanging over him should he commit another crime after he's released.

Barnes' attorney Erica Suter of Greenbelt told Judge Stamm that her client had never had the opportunity for substance abuse treatment and the request afforded him the opportunity for that before he is released.

Barnes told the judge said he has had a lot of time to reflect on what he did during his more than 10 years in the Maryland Department of Corrections. "I did a lot of hurt in my life and I apologize. What I did was wrong," he said.

The co-defendant in the case, Kenneth Barnes, 46, of Cheverly received two consecutive 20-year sentences but they were suspended to a total of 10 years. He is on five years' probation.

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