

ALERT TOP STORY

Man who shot at car full of teens sentenced to 18 months in prison

Keith Epps

May 8, 2023

A Spotsylvania County man who shot into the rear of a vehicle full of teenagers who had mistakenly pulled into his driveway last year was ordered Monday to serve a year and a half in prison.

Brent D. Alford, who will turn 50 later this month, was sentenced in Spotsylvania Circuit Court to a total of nine years with all but 18 months suspended. He was convicted by a jury in February of unlawfully shooting into an occupied vehicle and four misdemeanor counts of assault.

According to the evidence presented by prosecutors Crystal Montague-Holland and Ryan Mehaffey, three teenage siblings and a friend were on their way to a party on the night of June 18 in the 6300 block of Grace Hill when their GPS led them into Alford's driveway. The home they were intending to go to was a couple of houses away.



Alford

The driver, recent high school graduate Devin Johnson, was turning around to leave when Alford started banging on the car window and yelling. The car was headed back to the road when Alford fired his 9mm handgun into the trunk of the fleeing vehicle.

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The round struck a jug of antifreeze in the trunk and missed the four occupants. Alford, who called 911 after firing the shot, told police that the car struck him twice and that he fired in self-defense.

Johnson and his younger brother both testified that they are still tormented by the thought that their sister or a friend in the backseat could have been killed by Alford's irrational actions.

"A can of coolant altered the trajectory of that bullet," Johnson said. "Pure luck and God Himself protected us."

Montague-Holland told Judge William Glover that Alford clearly fabricated the story about being hit by the car and said that if not for the antifreeze, Spotsylvania County might have made national news.

"We simply can't have a community in which people shoot first and ask questions later," Montague-Holland said.

Alford on Monday apologized to the victims and their families and said he now realizes that his actions were wrong. "I'm truly sorry," said Alford, who previously worked as a sheriff's deputy in Johnston County, N.C., and as a correctional officer at the Rappahannock Regional Jail. "My heart goes out to them."

Defense attorney Mark Murphy argued that Alford's "terrible mistake" should not outweigh the good he's done, including serving honorably in the Marine Corps. Murphy asked that Alford, who has spent two months in jail, be released.

Mehaffey said Alford deserved a prison sentence.

"He almost killed children for absolutely no good reason," Mehaffey said.

Judge Glover agreed, saying that more is expected of someone with military and law-enforcement training.

"It was nothing more than luck that you didn't kill somebody," Glover said just before pronouncing judgement.

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