330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-4040
SanDiegoDA.com

OFFICE OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
SUMMER STEPHAN
District Attorney

RACHEL SOLOV
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

November 16, 2026
For Immediate Release

Contact: Tanya Sierra (619) 531-3315
***En Español* Barbara Medina (619) 531-3305**

Oceanside Man Sentenced for 2008 Murder of Disabled Military Veteran

Cold Case Solved Through Advances in DNA Technology

San Diego County District Attorney **Summer Stephan** announced today that Jeffrey Roberson, 60, was sentenced today to 26-years-to-life in prison for the 2008 murder of Cecil Zachary Jr., a military veteran with paraplegia who was beaten to death with a wooden log in his Oceanside home.

Jeffrey Roberson was convicted by a jury of first-degree murder on August 27, after a six-day trial. The jury also found true an allegation that he used a deadly weapon, a wooden log, during the commission of the murder.


Photo of Victim: Cecil Zachary Jr.

"This was a brutal and intentional killing of a vulnerable victim in his own home," DA Stephan said. "For more than 18 years, Cecil's loved ones endured the pain and unanswered questions surrounding his death. Today's sentencing brings accountability for Cecil and his family. This case demonstrates that we will never give up on pursuing justice for victims, no matter how much time has passed. Advances in forensic DNA technology gave investigators a new opportunity to uncover critical evidence and identify the person responsible. I am grateful to the Oceanside Police Department investigators and our Cold Case Homicide Unit for their perseverance and dedication to this case."

On June 19, 2008, a home care nurse discovered Zachary, 51, dead with a towel covering his face in a hospital bed in the living room of his home in Oceanside's Fire Mountain neighborhood. Responding officers observed obvious signs of trauma. A wooden log was found at the scene and suspected to be the murder weapon. The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office determined that Zachary died from blunt-force injuries

to the head. Zachary had been paralyzed from the waist down following a traffic collision decades earlier and rarely left his bed.

For more than 17 years, investigators worked to identify the person responsible for Zachary's killing, but the case remained unsolved. The investigation was ultimately revived through advances in forensic DNA technology. Investigators used new technology to extract DNA from the wooden log, developing a DNA profile that linked Roberson to the killing.

In February 2025, Oceanside Police Department detectives arrested Roberson in Spring Valley. During a subsequent police interview, Roberson admitted to killing Zachary but claimed self-defense because Zachary pulled a gun on him. The jury rejected that claim and found him guilty of first-degree murder.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney John Philpott of the DA's Cold Case Homicide Unit. The Unit is dedicated to pursuing justice in unsolved homicide cases by working with law enforcement partners to reexamine evidence, utilize modern investigative techniques and take advantage of advances in forensic science. Its work helps provide answers to families and hold those responsible for long-unsolved homicides accountable, regardless of how much time has passed.

# # #

About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office
The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.