

The Post and Courier

By: David Macdougall

Friday April 1, 2011

Someone is finally paying for the 2009 drive-by shooting in Walterboro that killed a 20-month-old child and two adults and set the community on edge.

Haskell Jevor Simmons, 27, also known as "Perlo," of Bowman Lane, Walterboro, was found guilty Thursday of all three of the charges against him: criminal conspiracy, accessory before the fact of a felony (murder) and accessory before the fact of a felony (assault and battery with intent to kill), according to a news release from S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson's office.

"This is a long-awaited victory for the people of Walterboro," said Mark Plowden, a spokesman for the attorney general's office. "We promised action on this case. Though the wheels of justice sometimes move slowly, we are going to continue to get action."

Simmons was one of 20 people rounded up in June after a state grand jury probe of criminal gang activity in Colleton, Beaufort and Richland counties. He was a member of the Ritter-based Sand Hill gang, the gang authorities said was responsible for the Nov. 9, 2009, drive-by shooting on Gerideau Street that killed Christopher Powell, Charles Kittrell and 20-month-old Shaniyah Burden. A rival gang, the Dooley Hill gang, was based in the Gerideau Street area of Walterboro, authorities said.

Simmons was not the first of the 20 to be tried, but he is the first to be convicted, Plowden said. In January, there was a hung jury in the trial of Danziel Chapman, charged with three counts of murder in the shooting. Plowden said Chapman will be retried at a later date.

Simmons' trial was held this week in Beaufort County General Sessions Court. Circuit Judge Carmen Mullen sentenced Simmons to five years on the conspiracy charge, to life imprisonment for the accessory before the fact of murder charge and to 20 years on the charge of accessory before the fact of assault and battery with intent to kill.

The case was tried by assistant attorneys general Curtis Pauling and Cary Goings, Plowden said. "We are very, very pleased with the outcome," Plowden said. He said the harsh penalties meted out should send a message to the remaining defendants. "We hope it reverberates throughout the county and the Lowcountry."