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Cop: Defendant said he shot guard; He allegedly admitted he wanted to rob PHA aide

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Full Text (502 words)

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Armed with an SKS rifle, Zahir Boddy-Johnson knocked on the door of a Philadelphia Housing Authority security booth in a Germantown high-rise last year, then pointed the gun at the police officer inside, according to a statement read yesterday in court.

"I was going to rob him," Boddy-Johnson said in the statement in which he allegedly admitted to shooting PHA Officer Craig Kelley. "When he [the officer] opened the door to the booth, I shot one time."

Boddy-Johnson said that the officer then closed the door and that he fired two more times, trying to shoot through the glass window of the front security booth in the Queen Lane Apartments on Queen Lane near Pulaski Street.

"I was just shooting," he said.

Kelley, now 50, was hit in the left side of his abdomen, apparently from the first shot. He has testified that when he opened the door, the gunman, who had a scarf covering part of his face, yelled, "Don't move!" then fired.

Boddy-Johnson, 18, is on trial before a Common Pleas jury on charges of attempted murder, aggravated assault and carrying a firearm on a public street in the Feb. 17, 2008, shooting, which occurred shortly after 10 p.m.

In a statement taken just hours after the shooting, he told detectives that he wanted to rob the PHA officer of a laptop and his gun to "sell them for restitution for my stolen-car case."

He said that after he pointed the rifle at the officer, Kelley "tried to close the door," then "I just shot at the booth because I thought he was going to shoot at me." He said he then fled.

He said that he had bought the SKS rifle "off the street" and that "it came with the bullets," according to the statement read by Homicide Detective Patrick Mangold.

Asked if he had fired the weapon before that night, the defendant said he had used it in target practice, shooting at bottles in a park near his home on Diamond Street near 25th in North Philadelphia.

When detained by Police Officer Robert Lee Jr. shortly after the shooting, Boddy-Johnson said he had an aunt who lives at the Queen Lane Apartments.

Boddy-Johnson had been arrested Aug. 21, 2007, after he was found trying to steal a Jeep Cherokee on Girard Avenue near 20th Street, in Fairmount, according to police records. The Jeep belonged to a police detective.

The case was resolved in Family Court without a trial after Boddy-Johnson agreed to pay restitution to the Jeep's owner.

Yesterday, after the commonwealth rested its case, the defense called two character witnesses, including the defendant's mother, Sharron Boddy, of Pittsburgh. Both testified that Boddy-Johnson has a reputation of being peaceful, truthful and law-abiding.

Defense attorney Mike Parkinson and Assistant District Attorney Deborah Cooper Nixon are to present closing

arguments to the jury this morning.

Afterward, Judge Gwendolyn Bright is to instruct jurors on the charges, and the jury will then begin deliberations. *

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