



**STEPHEN B. RUSSELL**  
*Office of the State Attorney*  
*20th Judicial Circuit*

Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee

June 8, 2017

**Guilty of Murder**

This afternoon Michael James Russo, 29, was found guilty of Second Degree Murder and First Degree Arson for the 2015 killing of Kyle Farishian following a trial in Punta Gorda.

In the early morning hours of November 1<sup>st</sup>, Russo entered the 7-Eleven convenience store at Bal Harbor Boulevard and Aquí Esta Drive. He had gloves on and his head covered so he could not be immediately identified. He was carrying a gasoline can in one hand and a firearm in the other. When the 18-year-old store clerk came in contact with him, Russo shot him. After he fell to the ground, Russo shot him again.

Russo then poured gasoline from the can he was carrying over the victim and the counter. He tried unsuccessfully two times to set it ablaze and the third time he did.

Russo had prior incidents at this convenience store, ultimately resulting in a trespass warning being issued against him. On two prior occasions, Russo had become belligerent with a particular store clerk, not the victim. Russo continued to harass employees including calling the manager on her personal cell phone and filing online complaints.

The morning that Russo murdered Farishian he did not steal anything, other than the three lighters he used to start the fire. The entire crime was captured on the store's surveillance video which helped lead to identifying the defendant. The video showed his physical characteristics, mannerisms, and distinct walking gait. He also had removed a glove during the time he was trying to start the fire which assisted in identifying him.

A gasoline can recovered from Russo's garage was also later determined to be the same as the gasoline can used in the crime.

Russo faces up to life in prison when he is sentenced on July 17<sup>th</sup>. Assistant State Attorneys Shannon Doolity, Dan Feinberg of our Homicide Unit, and Kyle Stublen handled the case.

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