

Ex-cop gets 14 months over death

McClain's mother calls him 'bully with a badge'

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER – A judge sentenced an ex-Colorado police officer to 14 months in jail for his role in the death of Elijah McClain after hearing the young Black man's mother on Friday call the officer a “bully with a badge” who will always have blood on his hands.

The officer, Randy Roedema, was the first and most senior law enforcement member on the scene of McClain's death and the only one found guilty. A jury convicted him in October of criminally negligent homicide, which is a felony, and third-degree assault, which is a misdemeanor.

The 23-year-old's killing on Aug. 24, 2019, received little attention at the time but gained renewed interest the following year as mass protests swept the nation over the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. McClain's death became a rallying cry for critics of racial injustice in policing.

In a separate trial, two paramedics were recently convicted for injecting McClain with an overdose of the sedative ketamine after police put him in a neck hold. Sentencing for the paramedics will come later this year.

Before Judge Mark Warner handed down the sentence, McClain's mother, Sheneen McClain, raged against Roedema after he expressed remorse but stopped short of apologizing.

“Randy Roedema stole my son's life,” she said, “All the belated apologies in the world can't remove my son's blood from Randy Roedema's hands.”

Protecting the community was “the furthest thing from his mind” the night her son was stopped walking home from



Ex-police officer Randy Roedema speaks on his behalf during sentencing at the Adams County Court in Brighton, Colo., on Friday. Roedema was sentenced to 14 months in jail for his role in the death of Elijah McClain. ABC NEWS ONE/POOL VIA AP

the store, she said.

Roedema also spoke at the hearing, as well as his sister and former military colleagues. Roedema was a U.S. Marine who was wounded in Iraq.

“I want the McClain family to know the sadness I feel about Elijah being gone. He was young,” Roedema said.

Roedema suggested Friday that first responders get more training in how to deal with situations such as the one that led to McClain being given an overdose.

“Ultimately the situation has caused a lot of pain, and we are faced with the choice of how to deal with it,” Roedema said.

Roedema's lawyer Don Sisson declined to comment on the sentence as he left court with Roedema and his wife. A deputy escorted them to their cars.

McClain was stopped by police after

a 911 caller reported that he looked suspicious. Another officer put his hands on McClain within seconds, beginning a struggle and restraint that lasted about 20 minutes before paramedics injected him with the ketamine.

Experts say the sedative ultimately killed McClain, who was already weakened from struggling to breathe while being pinned down after inhaling vomit into his lungs.

Roedema helped hold McClain down while paramedics administered the ketamine. He was often visible in the body camera footage shown over and over to jurors, and he could be heard directing others how to restrain him.

Roedema had faced anywhere from probation to up to three years in prison for criminally negligent homicide, defined as killing someone by failing to



Sheneen McClain, right, the mother of Elijah McClain, and friend and supporter MiDian Holmes, left, leave the Adams County Court in Brighton, Colo., on Friday.

HYOUNG CHANG/THE DENVER POST VIA AP

recognize a substantial risk to their life. The assault conviction was punishable by probation up to two years in jail.

The same jury that convicted Roedema acquitted former officer Jason Rosenblatt, whose lawyers stressed that he wasn't close to McClain when the ketamine was injected.

A different jury acquitted officer Nathan Woodyard a few weeks later, after he testified that he put McClain in a neck hold, briefly rendering him unconscious. Woodyard testified that he feared for his life after Roedema said McClain had grabbed for one of their guns. Prosecutors say the gun grab never happened.

Aurora Fire Rescue paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec were convicted last month. Cichuniec, the senior officer, was found guilty of the most serious charge faced by any of the first responders: felony second-degree assault. It carries a mandatory prison sentence of between five and 16 years in prison.