

STATE OF LOUISIANA	*	NO. 2026-KA-0351
VERSUS	*	COURT OF APPEAL
KOBIN WRIGHT	*	FOURTH CIRCUIT
	*	STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPEAL FROM
CRIMINAL DISTRICT COURT ORLEANS PARISH
NO. 565-324, SECTION “F”
Honorable Robin D. Pittman

Judge Monique G. Morial

(Court composed of Judge Rosemary Ledet, Judge Dale N. Atkins, Judge Monique G. Morial)

JASON R. WILLIAMS
District Attorney
Parish of Orleans

BRAD SCOTT
Chief of Appeals

Peter Vesich
Assistant District Attorney
Parish of Orleans
619 S. White Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

COUNSEL FOR PLAINTIFF/APPELLEE

Remy Voisin Starns
LOUISIANA APPEALS AND WRIT SERVICE
301 Main Street, Suite 700
Baton Rouge, LA 70825

Jane Louise Beebe
ATTORNEY AT LAW
P. O. Box 463
Addis, LA 70710

COUNSEL FOR DEFENDANT/APPELLANT

**CONVICTION FOR SECOND DEGREE
MURDER AFFIRMED; CONVICTION
FOR OBSTRUCITON OF JUSTICE
VACATED
OCTOBER 20, 2026**

Defendant, Kobin Wright, appeals his convictions for second degree murder and obstruction of justice. For the following reasons, we affirm Defendant’s conviction for second degree murder. However, we find the evidence presented by the State at trial insufficient to support a conviction for obstruction of justice and we vacate that conviction.

Statement of the Case

On February 20, 2025, Defendant was indicted by a grand jury for one count of second degree murder in violation of La. R.S. 14:30.1 and one count of obstruction of justice in violation of La. R.S. 14:130.1 Defendant pled not guilty at arraignment. On December 3, 2025, at the conclusion of a three-day jury trial, a twelve-person jury found Defendant guilty as charged on each count. On February 6, 2026, the trial court sentenced Defendant to life imprisonment at hard labor without the benefit of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence for his second degree murder conviction and to thirty years imprisonment for his obstruction of justice conviction. This timely appeal followed.

Factual Background

On February 4, 2023, the victim, Ryan Williams, Jr. was shot and killed in his vehicle while driving down Franklin Avenue toward his residence, which he shared with his parents. Surveillance videos from the victim's residence and various nearby businesses show the victim's blue Nissan Altima traveling down Franklin Avenue while being followed by a silver Toyota RAV4 with distinctive rear passenger side damage. The surveillance videos demonstrate that, as the vehicles approached the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Clover Street, the RAV4 passed on the driver's side of the victim's car as someone in the RAV4 repeatedly shot at the victim's car. The victim's car continued down Franklin until it hit a curb or tree root, flipped over, and crashed into a tree; the RAV4 immediately turned left onto Acacia Street and fled the scene. Through investigation, as discussed below, officers concluded that Derrick Theriot was the driver of the RAV4 and that Defendant, Kobin Wright, was the passenger.

At trial, Officer Vanessa Ortiz testified that she was one of the initial officers to respond to the scene, at 4:33 p.m. She identified multiple 9-1-1 calls reporting the shooting and subsequent car crash. Officer Ortiz testified that the victim was unresponsive upon arrival and stated that she removed a gun secured from the victim's waistband.¹

¹ Dr. Samantha Huber, the chief pathologist for the New Orleans Coroner's Office, was qualified as an expert in forensic pathology. She conducted the autopsy on the victim, Ryan Williams, Jr. She noted that the victim sustained nine gunshot wounds: one to the head that was fatal and from which a bullet had been recovered; three graze wounds to the forehead, the scalp, and the jaw; one wound to the upper left chest which fractured a vertebrae; one wound through the

Destiny Martin of the NOPD Crime Lab testified that she processed the scene and identified photographs of the scene and spent casings found in the street and at the intersection of Franklin and Acacia Street.

The parties stipulated that Sean McElrath, the Section Head of the NOPD Forensic Unit of the Crime Lab, was an expert firearms examiner. He identified three reports he prepared in connection with his examination of casings found at the scene and in the victim's car, as well as a bullet and bullet fragments recovered during the victim's autopsy. He testified that the casings found at the scene were 7.62x39mm cartridge casings, commonly associated with ammunition from an AK-47 rifle, and determined that they were all fired from the same weapon. He further determined that the single casing found in the victim's car was also fired from the same weapon. He could not match the bullet or bullet fragments retrieved during the autopsy to the same weapon, but he stated that the bullet retrieved during the autopsy was also a 7.62x39mm. On cross-examination, Mr. McElrath admitted that 7.62x39mm. ammunition is commonly found in New Orleans.

Detective Matthew Riffle, the lead homicide officer, testified that video surveillance confirmed that the murder occurred at 4:26 p.m. He testified that he reviewed surveillance videos from multiple nearby businesses, including the barber shop where the victim had his haircut just prior to the murder. The video surveillance showed the victim leaving the nearby barber shop. At 4:24 p.m., video surveillance from a nearby convenience store showed the victim's blue Nissan

victim's left arm; and three shallow wounds where fragments were embedded, including on the left jaw, the left chest, and the upper scalp.

Altima traveling down Franklin Avenue, followed by a silver RAV4 with distinctive body damage to the rear passenger side and a Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) camera footage showed the RAV4 following behind the victim's car at that time. At 4:26 p.m., an Automated License Plate System Camera at Franklin and Sage Street, approximately 2 blocks from the shooting location, recorded the license plate on the RAV4 and the license plate on the victim's car.

Det. Riffle found no surveillance video on Acacia Street when the RAV4 fled the scene, but did review surveillance on Clematis Street, one street over from Franklin, showing the RAV4 with distinctive rear passenger side body damage heading toward the I-10 at 4:27 p.m.

Det. Riffle reviewed surveillance video from the victim's residence on Franklin Avenue and determined that the victim's driver side window was visible on the video and remained closed throughout the video surveillance footage. Another angle recorded a pedestrian walking down Franklin Avenue who immediately began running around the corner, apparently in response to the shooting.² He testified that the bullet casings found on the street at the scene were found just before and at the intersection where the RAV4 turned to flee the scene.

Det. Riffle testified that he ran the license plate on the RAV4, but that the plate was registered to a different vehicle which led him to believe the RAV4 may be stolen. Two days later, the RAV4 was located in the rear parking lot of the Reveal Apartments located on Chef Menteur past Michoud. Video surveillance

² One 9-1-1 call played for the jury was made by an individual who stated that he did not witness the shooting but that he was walking down the street at the time of the shooting.

obtained from the complex reflects that the RAV4 arrived at the complex at approximately 6:27 p.m. and that two men in hoodies eventually entered an apartment.³

Det. Riffle testified that the victim's vehicle was searched. The victim's cell phone was recovered and submitted to the Digital Forensics Unit, but no evidence on the phone supported any motive for the shooting and further reflected no connection between the victim and Theriot or Defendant. A search of the RAV4 pursuant to a warrant recovered a second license plate, which also did not match the vehicle, a temporary license plate tag, a baggie of marijuana, and a shell casing from the trunk. Moreover, fingerprints lifted from the RAV4 were determined to belong to Derrick Theriot.⁴

Det. Riffle testified that Theriot was arrested in November 2023 on unrelated drug and weapons charges. Det. Riffle interviewed Theriot at that time about the murder, but Theriot denied being involved. After receiving cell phone records that placed Theriot near Franklin Avenue at the time of the murder, Det. Riffle arrested Theriot in December 2023 for the murder. At that time, Theriot admitted to being present at the time of the murder but refused to name the

³ Det. Riffle stated that officers obtained a search warrant for the apartment and spoke with a man and woman who were inside. The officers found a gun in a closet, but it could not have discharged the casings found at the scene of the murder. They seized the man's phone, but a review of his records showed the phone was not at the scene when the murder occurred. They later determined that Theriot called the resident right before arriving at the apartment.

⁴ Officer Steven Olivotto of the NOPD Crime Lab was qualified as an expert in friction print ridge examination of fingerprints. He testified that he was given thirteen impressions taken from the RAV4, four of which were suitable for examination. He compared the four impressions to fingerprints from an arrest register for Derrick Theriot, and he found that all four fingerprints lifted from the RAV4 belonged to Derrick Theriot.

passenger/shooter. He subsequently named two other individuals, both of whom were deceased, and indicated at that time that the shooter was paranoid and believed that the victim was out to get him, so he shot the victim first.⁵

Det. Riffle was present at a meeting in August 2024 between Theriot, his attorney, investigators from the Louisiana State Police, a representative of the U.S. Attorney's Office, and an assistant district attorney. At this meeting, Theriot named a different deceased person as the shooter; when prompted, he then wrote the nickname of the shooter, "Noonie," on a piece of paper. He described "Noonie" as a Black male around thirty years old, with a large forehead, who lived in the Desire area.

Det. Riffle checked Theriot's phone records and discovered a text message to someone an hour before the murder in which he stated he was with "Noon" and another text an hour after the murder wherein he stated he was "still" with "Noon." Det. Riffle then checked the list of contacts on Theriot's phone and found a number for "Noon." Theriot confirmed that this person was the shooter, and he provided "Noonie's" Instagram account as well, the username for which was "noondeniro_shootfirstkobk." Det. Riffle determined that the phone number and Instagram account were registered to Defendant.

Det. Riffle testified that there was a phone call between Theriot and Defendant on the day of the murder, and at 1:26 p.m., Defendant texted Theriot that he was on his way. From the Instagram account, Det. Riffle was able to obtain

⁵ Det. Riffle testified that it is common for suspects to implicate deceased individuals as there is no risk of retaliation.

Defendant's photo, which matched one of the men seen on the surveillance videos, and identify Defendant's birthday.

Det. Riffle testified that after learning the identity of "Noonie," he obtained an arrest warrant for Defendant. Defendant was arrested at his mother's residence. The cell phone records reflected that Defendant made a phone call to his mother soon after the murder. A search of Defendant's mother's residence recovered an empty gun box found in Defendant's closet for a Cugir Mini Draco HC rifle, which could fire 7.62x39mm ammunition. However, the weapon was never recovered.

Charles Dionne, a crime analyst for NOPD's Homicide Division and an expert qualified in call detail analysis, testified concerning his analysis of phone records for the investigation.⁶ He identified his report in which he mapped out the geographic location of Defendant's and Theriot's phones from 3:30 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. on the day of the shooting. He testified that he used the locations of cell towers that connected with the suspects' phones to determine the phones' locations, but he stated that these locations could only be determined when calls were either made or received.

Mr. Dionne testified that the homicide occurred between 4:25 p.m. and 4:28 p.m. Two calls registered to Defendant's phone number within two to three minutes after the time of the homicide and his phone connected to cell towers in the area of the homicide during those calls. Another call connected to a tower in Gentilly at 4:29 p.m., then further into New Orleans East at 4:42 p.m., and Mr.

⁶ The State introduced into evidence the AT&T cell phone records for Theriot's phone and the T-Mobile cell phone records for Defendant's phone.

Dionne opined that Defendant's phone was likely in a vehicle traveling on the I-10. There was no further activity registered on Defendant's phone until sometime between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m., and again at 7:10 p.m., when the phone connected with a tower on Chef Menteur Highway in New Orleans East that was near an apartment complex.

Mr. Dionne testified that because Theriot's and Defendant's phones had different carriers, they did not connect to the same cell towers. However, he used GeoTime software to coordinate the location of Defendant's and Theriot's phones and testified that his analysis showed that both phones were: in the same area at the time of the homicide; in New Orleans East by 5:00 p.m.; in the area of the apartment building on Chef Menteur by 7:00 p.m. During this time frame, the phones were traveling in close proximity to each other and Mr. Dionne opined that they were traveling together because the towers showed their phones were less than one mile apart throughout this time frame in different areas of the city. On cross-examination, he acknowledged that his analysis only tracks the locations of the cell phones and cannot determine who was in possession of the phones.

Derrick Theriot testified at trial. Theriot admitted that he had a prior conviction in 2016 for possession of Tramadol and federal convictions for drug- and gun-related charges arising out of his 2023 arrest. In addition, he testified that he pled guilty in the present case to obstruction of justice for his participation in the murder of the victim, Ryan Williams, Jr. and received a 40-year sentence with all but 15 years suspended. Theriot testified that he lied in November and

December of 2023 when he spoke with Det. Riffle and initially denied any involvement and stated that he was with his brother at a barber shop and then subsequently implicated two deceased individuals because he was without counsel and he was afraid.

Theriot testified that he knew Defendant as “Noonie.” Theriot identified Noonie at trial as Kobin Wright and identified him as the shooter in the RAV4 on the day of the murder. He testified that he and Defendant were traveling together in the RAV4 and that Defendant was in the passenger seat. Theriot testified that Defendant began shooting at the victim’s vehicle because he was paranoid and thought the victim was after him. Theriot stated that he was unaware of any relationship between Defendant and the victim or of any motive for the shooting. Theriot testified that he and Defendant were together after the murder and he identified Defendant as the individual with him entering the Reveal Apartments after the murder.

Ryan Williams, Sr., the victim’s father, testified that his son worked as a courier for the V.A. Hospital and had a young daughter. Mr. Williams testified that on the day of his son’s murder, he met with his son and convinced him to get a haircut. Mr. Williams testified that he left the home and when he returned home around 5:00 p.m., he saw the street was blocked off and observed a wrecked car in the next block that looked like his son’s vehicle. He stated that the police told him that the wreck occurred because someone shot at the car. He provided the police with surveillance videos recorded from his house. He stated that he had never met

either Theriot or Defendant prior to the murder and had no knowledge whether his son knew them.

Law and Analysis

On appeal, Defendant challenges the sufficiency of the evidence presented against him at trial to support his convictions. This Court has recently discussed the applicable standard of review on appeal when reviewing a sufficiency of the evidence claim:

When appellate courts review the sufficiency of the evidence to support a conviction, they apply the standard enunciated in *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 99 S.Ct. 2781, 61 L.Ed.2d 560 (1979). *State v. Dukes*, 19-0172, p.7 (La. App. 4 Cir. 10/2/19), 281 So.3d 745, 752. Under the *Jackson* standard, the court must determine whether the evidence, viewed in the light most favorable to the prosecution, was sufficient to support a rational trier of fact's finding that all of the elements of a crime were proven beyond a reasonable doubt. *Id.* See also *State v. Tate*, 01-0658, p. 4 (La. 5/20/03), 851 So.2d 921, 928.

The appellate court must review the record in its entirety. *State v. Mussall*, 523 So.2d 1305, 1310 (La. 1988). "If rational triers of fact could disagree as to the interpretation of the evidence, the rational trier's view of all the evidence most favorable to the prosecution must be adopted." *Id.*

State v. Bradford, 2025-0781, p. 6 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/19/26), 437 So.3d 36, 40 (quoting *State v. Blue*, 24-0737, pp. 4-5 (La. App. 4 Cir. 8/21/25), 431 So.3d 108, 112, writ denied, 25-01203 (La. 3/18/26), 427 So.3d 1238 (internal quotations omitted)).

Second Degree Murder Conviction

Defendant was convicted of second degree murder. La. R.S. 14:130.1 defines second degree murder as the killing of a human being when the offender has the specific intent to kill or inflict great bodily harm. The evidence presented at trial reflects that the victim died at the scene from multiple gunshot wounds. On

appeal, Defendant does not dispute that the evidence of the offender's conduct supports a second degree murder conviction; rather, Defendant challenges that the evidence established his identity as the shooter.

Concerning the appellate court's role in reviewing a jury verdict when the issue on appeal is the identity of the perpetrator, this Court has recently stated:

In discussing the issue of identification, the Louisiana Supreme Court has held that "when the key issue is the defendant's identity as the perpetrator, rather than whether the crime was committed, the [S]tate is required to negate any reasonable probability of misidentification." *Id.* (first citing *State v. Neal*, 2000-0674, p. 11 (La. 6/29/01), 796 So.2d 649, 658; and then citing *State v. Smith*, 430 So.2d 31, 45 (La. 1983)). However, the Louisiana Supreme Court has further held that "[a] positive identification by only one witness is sufficient to support a conviction." *Id.* (first citing *Neal*, 2000-0674, p. 11, 796 So.2d at 658; and then citing *State v. Mussall*, 523 So.2d 1305, 1311 (La. 1988)). That is, if the trier of fact made a credibility determination and believed the testimony of a single witness, then that witness' testimony alone is sufficient for the district court to convict and for the appellate court to affirm the conviction. *State v. Wells*, 2010-1338, p. 5 (La. App. 4 Cir. 3/30/11), 64 So.3d 303, 306 (citing *State v. White*, 28,095, p. 14 (La. App. 2 Cir. 5/8/96), 674 So.2d 1018, 1027).

State v. Butler, 24-0061, pp. 12–13 (La. App. 4 Cir. 12/30/24), 407 So.3d 744, 751.

Defendant maintains that the evidence failed to prove that he was the person who shot the victim. He asserts that the only evidence connecting him to the murder is Theriot's identification of him as the shooter. Defendant contends that Theriot's testimony was not credible because Theriot initially denied any participation in the murder and then changed his story multiple times, implicating other individuals in the crime. He further challenges Theriot's credibility because of the plea deal Theriot reached with the State, wherein the State dismissed the murder charge against Theriot and allowed him to plead guilty to obstruction of

justice and receive a forty-year sentence, all but fifteen years of which was suspended.

However, the testimony and evidence at trial demonstrates that the jurors were aware of the plea deal that Theriot obtained; that he initially denied any participation in the murder; and of his efforts to name two deceased men as the shooter. The jury nonetheless found Theriot's testimony, and identification of Defendant as the shooter traveling with Theriot in the silver RAV4 on the date of the murder, to be credible.

Moreover, although Defendant's phone records only showed that his phone was in the area at the time of the murder and could not prove that Defendant was in possession of his phone during the time frame at issue, Theriot's phone records showed that he texted another person an hour prior to the murder that he was with "Noon." The text messages further showed that Theriot sent another text message approximately one hour after the murder, stating that he was "still" with "Noon." Theriot's phone listed Defendant's contact as "Noon," and Defendant's Instagram user name included the name "noon." Moreover, the expert testimony demonstrated that Theriot and Defendant's cell phone records showed that both phones appeared to be traveling together throughout the afternoon of the murder, including at the murder scene at the time of the murder, in Gentilly thereafter, and then in New Orleans East, including the area where Theriot parked the RAV4 at the Reveal Apartment complex that evening. The geographical location information obtained from the cell phone records supports a finding that Theriot

and Defendant were together prior to and after the shooting, and bolsters Theriot's claim that Defendant was in the passenger seat in the RAV4 at the time he shot at the victim as they passed him on Franklin Avenue. The jury could have rationally accepted this testimony. This assignment has no merit.

Obstruction of Justice Conviction

Defendant challenges the sufficiency of the evidence presented against him to support his obstruction of justice conviction. La. R.S. 14:130.1(A) defines obstruction of justice as follows:

A. The crime of obstruction of justice is any of the following acts when committed with the knowledge that the act has, reasonably may, or will affect an actual or potential present, past, or future criminal proceeding, civil immigration proceeding, or official act of an agent or employee of a governmental entity:

(1) Tampering with evidence with the specific intent of distorting the results of any criminal investigation or proceeding which may reasonably prove relevant to a criminal investigation or proceeding. Tampering with evidence shall include the intentional alteration, movement, removal, or addition of any object or substance either:

(a) At the location of any incident which the perpetrator knows or has good reason to believe will be the subject of any investigation by state, local, or United States law enforcement officers[.]

“Under La. R.S. 14:130.1(A)(1), obstruction of justice is a specific intent crime.” *State v. Scott*, 23-0022, p. 15 (La. App. 4 Cir. 8/30/23), 372 So.3d 42, 54.

“‘Specific intent’ is the state of mind that exists when circumstances indicate the offender actively desired prescribed criminal consequences to follow his act.” *Id.*

(citing La. R.S. 14:10(1)). To support an obstruction of justice conviction, “the State must prove more than the mere removal of evidence from a crime scene; the State must also prove that such removal was done with ‘the specific intent of distorting the results of any criminal investigation or proceeding that may

reasonably prove relevant to a criminal investigation or proceeding.” *State v. Scott*, 23-0022, p. 15, 372 So.3d at 54, (citing La. R.S. 14:130.1(A)(1)). When the evidence presented is circumstantial, the Court must apply the following rule: “assuming every fact to be proved that the evidence tends to prove, in order to convict, it must exclude every reasonable hypothesis of innocence.” *State v. Scott*, 23-0022, pp. 15-16, 372 So.3d at 54.

On appeal, Defendant argues that the only evidence presented to support his obstruction of justice conviction is the fact that the murder weapon was never recovered. The State argues that this is sufficient evidence to support an obstruction of justice conviction, contending that the jury could reasonably have inferred that Defendant removed the murder weapon from the scene of the murder with the intent to interfere or impede the investigation.

This Court has held that, “the act of removing a firearm from a crime scene, without more, is insufficient to ‘prove beyond a reasonable doubt that [the defendant] possessed the specific intent to distort the police investigation.’” *State v. Bowie*, 24-0700, p. 18 (La. App. 4 Cir. 7/1/25), 424 So.3d 87, 100 (citing *State v. Scott*, 23-0022, p. 16, 372 So.3d at 55). The “totality of defendant’s actions” may be considered to infer specific intent but the evidence must generally show “additional action...to impede or distort the investigation aside from [the defendant’s] apparent removal of the firearm[.]” *State v. White*, 24-0385, pp. 24-25 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/14/25), ___ So.3d ___, ___, 2025 WL 1415587, *13, *writ denied*, 25-00801 (La. 1/21/26), 424 So.3d 1088; see also *State v. Johnson*, 25-391, p. 21 (La. App. 5 Cir. 2/25/26), 432 So.3d 259, 277 (wherein the Fifth Circuit, in reversing the defendant’s obstruction of justice conviction, found that “the State failed to exclude the reasonable hypothesis that Defendant simply fled the scene in

possession of his own firearm, without the specific intent to interfere with a criminal investigation.”) and *State v. Scott*, 23-0022, p. 17, 372 So.3d at 55 (wherein this Court, in vacating the defendant’s obstruction of justice conviction, pointed out that the defendant left shell casings and other evidence at the crime scene and, thus, a juror could reasonably infer that the defendant gave no thought to interfering with or distorting the investigation by his actions in removing the murder weapon from the scene).

In this case, the State points to no additional evidence, other than alleged removal of the firearm from the scene, to demonstrate Defendant’s intent to interfere with or distort the investigation. Moreover, in this case, there also is no direct evidence demonstrating that Defendant was in fact the individual who removed the firearm from the scene. The evidence reflects that Theriot, who pled guilty to obstruction of justice in connection with the victim’s murder, was also traveling in the RAV4 at the time of the murder and could have removed the firearm from the vehicle. Therefore, we find that the State failed to exclude every reasonable hypothesis of innocence and failed to present sufficient evidence to support an obstruction of justice conviction against Defendant.

Accordingly, we vacate Defendant’s obstruction of justice conviction.

Errors Patent

In accordance with La. C.Cr.P. art. 920, all appeals are reviewed for errors patent. In this appeal, the record reflects that the trial court failed to advise Defendant of the two-year prescriptive period for filing an application for post-conviction relief pursuant to La. C.Cr.P. art. 930.8. We hereby advise Defendant that no application for post-conviction relief, including an application which seeks

an out-of-time appeal, shall be considered if it is filed more than two years after the judgment of conviction and sentence has become final under the provisions of La. C.Cr.P. arts. 914 or 922. *State v. Turner*, 26-0082, p. 2 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/19/26), ____ So.3d ____, ____, 2026 WL 1396830. Accordingly, having herein advised Defendant of his post-conviction rights, we find the trial court's error to be harmless and does not require further action.

Decree

For the reasons provided, we affirm Defendant's conviction for second degree murder in violation of La. R.S. 14:30.1. However, because we find the State failed to present sufficient evidence at trial to prove the obstruction of justice charge, we vacate Defendant's conviction for obstruction of justice in violation of La.R.S.14:130.1.

**CONVICTION FOR SECOND DEGREE
MURDER AFFIRMED; CONVICTION
FOR OBSTRUCITON OF JUSTICE
VACATED**