

Judge: Veteran to remain at Bryce Hospital

By Stephanie Taylor / Staff Writer

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A U.S. Army veteran who threatened to commit a mass shooting in Tuscaloosa nearly 10 years ago will remain in custody of Bryce Hospital.

Psychiatrists at Bryce recommended that Walter Rogers, 63, be released to a less-restrictive environment of a group home, saying at two court hearings in June that he was stable, that they had done all they could and further hospitalization would be counter-therapeutic.

Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court Judge Allen May denied the request in an order issued Monday afternoon.

Rogers was found not guilty by reason of insanity in September 2010 after being charged with seven counts of making terrorist threats. He threatened to kill the president of Stillman College and made threats to former U.S. Congressman Artur Davis and Tuscaloosa city officials. He threatened to take students at Paul W. Bryant High School hostage, and made references to mass shootings at Virginia Tech and south Alabama.

“The potential reality of someone with Rogers’ history of violence, whose threats have included references to mass shootings and who shows a zeal for media attention, being stepped down to a group home with no apparent insight, much less proper insight, into the wrongfulness of his acts, is disturbing,” May wrote in the order. “The department contends that they have done all they can do for him, and they may have, and Rogers is simply incapable of obtaining the necessary insight.”

Rogers once held his family hostage with a knife and also suffered a traumatic brain injury when his former brother-in-law struck him with a 2-by-4 after he drove a vehicle into his ex-wife’s house.

The judge wrote in the order that Rogers hadn’t taken responsibility for past

violent crimes.

“In fact, it appears that he has failed to accept blame for the vast majority of the incidents that have plagued his life. He denied harming his mother, blamed his troubles with his ex-wife on the in-laws and said ‘I would never hurt children,’ ” in reference to the threats made to Bryant High.

He was held at Taylor Hardin until 2013, when he was transferred to Bryce. This was the third attempt to place him under the care of a group home.