

Wife's felony charge reduced

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BY KEITH EPPS

A woman who shot her husband three times during a dispute last year about suspected infidelity struck a deal yesterday that will leave her with no more than a misdemeanor conviction.

Melissa Lynn Morris, 32, entered an Alford plea in Spotsylvania County Circuit Court on a misdemeanor charge of domestic assault and battery.

But a finding of guilt was withheld on several conditions, including her being on good behavior for two years and continuing in counseling.

If Morris meets the conditions, the charge is likely to be dismissed. If not, she faces a maximum penalty of 12 months in jail.

Morris, who was represented by attorney Stuart Sullivan, was originally charged with malicious wounding.

The charge was later reduced to unlawful wounding and then to the misdemeanor.

Court records indicate that the prosecution reduced the charge after finding evidence to support Morris' claim that she acted in self-defense.

Her husband, John Morris, was charged with felony child abuse and domestic assault against her a couple of years ago and got a deferred disposition, the plea agreement states.

There was also evidence of uncharged violence in the household.

According to the evidence, John Morris came to their home on Morris Road Oct. 21 and confronted his wife about suspected infidelity.

John Morris told police that his wife went into another room, grabbed his .45-caliber pistol and shot him in the lower abdomen, chest and left thigh.

Morris told police he had not touched his wife before the shooting. He was treated for his injuries at a local hospital.

Melissa Morris told Detective Earle Swift that her husband was hiding in the kitchen when she got home that evening. He was supposed to be staying out of town for his job.

She said he came at her with the gun, hit her in the upper body, choked her and threatened to kill her if she called 911.

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Court records state that John Morris gave inconsistent statements at a preliminary hearing and later admitted not being able to recall the events clearly.

The Morrises are in the process of getting a divorce, court records state. They have three children.

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