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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EZEKIEL JAMES AGREES TO 30 TO 35.5 YEARS IN PRISON IN GIRLFRIEND'S DEATH

TOLEDO, Ohio – Ezekiel James pleaded no contest today to four felony offenses and agreed to serve 30 to 35.5 years in prison for the December 2025 shooting death of Haiden Babiuch and his efforts to make her death appear to be a suicide.

James, 20, of Oregon, Ohio, pleaded no contest in CR2026-00055 to one count each of involuntary manslaughter and felonious assault, along with two counts of tampering with evidence. The involuntary manslaughter and felonious assault counts each carry a mandatory three-year firearm specification.

On Dec. 6, 2025, just days after his release from the Wood County Jail following a probation violation in an unrelated case, James shot Babiuch, 18, at their shared home in Oregon. James then staged the gun on Babiuch to make her death appear to be a suicide. An autopsy and forensic examination showed the gunshot was not self-inflicted.

Investigators later found searches on James' phone for "How long can gun powder residue stay on your hands?," "Is it easy to remove gun powder residue with no soap on ur hands" and "Can a pathologist determine how far someone shot from." Investigators also reviewed video from a Blink camera James had positioned toward the kitchen and found gaps in the recording consistent with deleted footage.

"Haiden Babiuch should still be alive today," Lucas County Prosecuting Attorney Julia R. Bates said. "I hope today's resolution provides some measure of justice for Haiden and those who loved her. Far too many families in our community have experienced the devastating consequences of gun violence."

The firearm seized as evidence in the case, an American Tactical Imports Omni Hybrid pistol, will be destroyed.

Sentencing is set for Oct. 2, 2026, at 9 a.m. at the Lucas County Courthouse in Courtroom 9.

Assistant Prosecutor Jessica M. Worley led the case for the Lucas County Prosecutor's Office.

About the Lucas County Prosecutor's Office

The Lucas County Prosecutor's Office pursues justice, safeguards our community and advocates for victims. We balance accountability with individual rights, partnering with law enforcement to ensure public safety and fair governance. We are committed to integrity, outreach and justice for all.