



ERIK NASARENKO District Attorney

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Guilty Pleas in 2017 Christmas Day Murder

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Jose Acevedo (DOB 03/27/01) and Andy Diaz (DOB 09/27/00), both from Ventura, pled guilty to second-degree murder of Joseph Cruz, of Ventura. Acevedo and Diaz also admitted they used a knife in the commission of the crime and that the murder was committed for the benefit of a criminal street gang.

On December 25, 2017, Acevedo, Diaz, and a third man saw the victim in a Ventura parking garage and pursued him. Video surveillance captured the three men assault the victim who sustained 14 stab wounds to his body. Acevedo and Diaz admitted they each used knives to stab the victim.

Acevedo and Diaz were under the age of 18 at the time of the murder. Their cases were initially filed in juvenile court where both juveniles would have been eligible for release when they reached the age of 25. The People filed a motion to transfer the cases to adult court and, in July 2019, Judge Kevin McGee (Ret.) ordered the cases be transferred to adult criminal court. The case was investigated by the Ventura Police Department.

Acevedo and Diaz will be sentenced to 15 years to life in prison on June 30, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 12 of the Ventura County Superior Court.

“Gang violence is a grave threat to public safety,” said District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. “Depending on the circumstances, we will continue to seek transfer of juvenile offenders and prosecute gang and weapon enhancements to protect our communities.”

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The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 290 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.