



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Port Hueneme Man Pleads Guilty to Murder for Targeting Bicyclists with Vehicle

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Samuel Matthew Rocha (DOB 01/25/93), of Port Hueneme, pled guilty on August 24, 2026, to second-degree murder in the death of Pedro Valdez. Rocha had previously been convicted by a jury in April of four counts of assault with a deadly weapon, and two counts of battery. The jury was unable to reach verdicts on the remaining counts. The jury found the special allegation of causing great bodily injury in commission of a felony to be true. Now, four months later, Rocha pled guilty to murder and admitted to using his car as a deadly weapon.

On the evening of April 19, 2021, Rocha used his vehicle to target a group of seven bike riders who were pedaling near the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Ventura Road in Port Hueneme. Rocha stuck five of the bicyclists, killing 16-year-old Pedro Valdez and injuring four other minors. Two had serious injuries. Rocha fled the scene in his Lexus sedan. He was followed by a witness to his mother's apartment complex nearby. He was then arrested by a Port Hueneme Police Department officer who arrived at the complex.

Just 11 minutes prior to hitting the teenagers, Rocha had battered a male and female at a laundromat and intentionally stuck an employee with his vehicle as he was leaving the parking lot. The parking lot incident was captured on surveillance video.

Senior Deputy District Attorneys Richard Simon and Craig Gardner prosecuted the case.

“Rocha made the deliberate decision to use his vehicle as a weapon, killing 16-year-old Pedro Valdez and injuring four other young bicyclists,” Mr. Simon said. “This conviction holds him accountable and brings a measure of justice to Pedro, his family, and the other victims.”

Rocha is scheduled to be sentenced on October 27, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 12 of the Ventura County Superior Court. He remains in custody without bail and faces a maximum of 27 years to life in state prison.

Case: 2021010640

Defendant Information:

Samuel Matthew Rocha (DOB 01/25/93)
Port Hueneme

Charges convicted of:

- PC 187(a) – Murder
- (4 counts) PC 245(a)(1) – Assault with deadly weapon (car)
- (2 counts) PC 242 - Battery

Special allegations found true or admitted:

- PC 12022(b)(1) – Use of deadly weapon
- PC 12022.7(a) – Great bodily injury in commission of felony

