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Two West Side Crips Gang Members Sentenced for Deadly Shooting
People v. Danny Willis and Gary Pierson: Kern County Superior Court Case BF170590A/C

(Bakersfield) - Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a sentencing in a significant homicide case today. On May 1, 2025, Defendant Danny Willis pled no contest to one count of First-Degree Murder and admitted a gang allegation for the agreed upon sentence of 35 years to life for his role in the shooting that killed 50-year-old Edwin Smith and left four other victims injured. His co-defendant, Gary Pierson, entered a no contest plea to two counts of assault with a semi-automatic firearm and admitted a gang allegation for the agreed upon sentence of 15 years in state prison. The case was prosecuted by Chief Deputy District Attorney Joseph Marcano.

On May 29, 2025, the Honorable John W. Lua sentenced Willis to 35 years to life in prison. Pierson received a sentence of 15 years in prison.

On September 23, 2017, at approximately 1:40 a.m., Willis and several other members of the West Side Crips criminal street gang were present at the Martini's Feel Good Lounge located on Real Road in Bakersfield. While they were walking through the parking lot of the business, they came across a group which was comprised of subjects from the east side of Bakersfield. A confrontation arose between the two groups resulting in Willis and his accomplices, including Pierson, firing multiple rounds at the victims' group, killing Edwin Smith and injuring four other victims.

Approximately two weeks later on October 6, 2017, Willis conspired with accomplices to shoot a group of mourners who had gathered at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park in observance of the recent passing of Edwin Smith. Officers from the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) were able to intercept the alleged gang members who were en route to the park, armed with loaded firearms.

The murder investigation, led by detectives from BPD, was part of a larger investigation involving more than 300 law enforcement personnel from over 20 law enforcement agencies including the California

Highway Patrol and the California Department of Justice, in an operation which targeted the Bakersfield criminal street gang, the West Side Crips.

Assistant District Attorney Kenneth Russell commented; “We will not tolerate gang violence in our community and will continue the fight to remove dangerous and senseless individuals from our streets. This major operation is a testament of the collaborative efforts to maintain and enhance public safety.”

Danny Willis:



Gary Pierson:

