



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

ANDREA S. KOHLER
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
DDA Gina Pearl
(661) 868-2340

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RE: Murder Conviction: BF166772: Tobin Phillips

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a guilty verdict in a major homicide case today.

On August 21, 2020, a Kern County jury found Tobin Phillips guilty of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of torture for the January 2017 murder of eight-month-old Baron Smith. The jury also found it true that Phillips committed the murder while he had been released from custody on another felony child abuse case in Whitman County, Washington. The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Gina Pearl.

In November 2016, Phillips was charged with felony child abuse for assaulting a three-week-old girl in Whitman County, Washington. Phillips was ordered not to leave the State of Washington. Two weeks later, Phillips fled the state and moved to Tehachapi, CA and began living with his girlfriend and her two young children.

On January 2, 2017, Phillips was watching Baron Smith when he decided to torture and kill the eight-month-old boy. Phillips violently shook Baron, slammed Baron's head into a piece of furniture, severely twisted Baron's left nipple and ultimately, strangled Baron to death. Phillips fled the scene but ultimately turned himself into law enforcement.

Phillips faces a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for the special circumstances, first-degree murder of Baron Smith. Sentencing is scheduled for September 18, 2020 before the Honorable John W. Lua.

Notified of the verdict, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented, "First-Degree murder with special circumstances carries the highest penalty recognized under the law, and the fact that this case involved the most innocent of all victims is a reminder of why that is the case. Kern County should take pride that its prosecutors' dedication to the pursuit of justice despite these uncertain times is second to none."

Tobin Phillips:

