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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by JAK
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**Re: First Degree Murder Convictions And Death Penalty Phase Verdict:
People v. Darnell Hammond and Jim Langston, BF165964**

(BAKERSFIELD) Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant conviction today. In a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Marcus Cuper, a Kern County jury found Defendants Darnell Hammond and Jim Langston guilty of two counts of First-Degree Murder with special circumstances for committing multiple murders, murders during the course of a robbery and burglary, and murders in furtherance of a criminal street gang. The jury also found Hammond and Langston guilty of two counts of robbery with firearm and gang enhancements. The jury returned the guilty verdicts for Hammond on Langston on September 21, 2021.

Following the verdicts, the jury heard additional evidence during the penalty phase regarding Hammond. Because the District Attorney had not waived the death penalty regarding Hammond's case, and the jury's findings resulted in convictions that were eligible for capital punishment, the case proceeded to the penalty phase, wherein evidence was presented to the jury regarding the suitability of the death penalty or life in prison without the possibility of parole. After hearing evidence in a penalty phase, the jury was tasked with returning a unanimous verdict for whether the penalty should be the death penalty or life in prison without the possibility of parole.

On October 7, 2021, the jury announced its verdict in the penalty phase for Hammond, and declined to issue the death penalty for Hammond, finding instead that Life Without the Possibility of Parole was the appropriate punishment for Hammond's crimes.

On October 14, 2016, Heriberto Aceves and his son Juan Aceves were working together in their family's convenience store in Lamont. Shortly before 10:00 a.m. a group of three masked men armed with guns rushed through the doors of their business and demanded money. Darnell Hammond pistol-whipped Juan and Heriberto during the course of the robbery. Heriberto then pulled out a gun to defend himself, his son, and his property and a shootout occurred. Heriberto and Juan were shot to death by Hammond

during the robbery. Two of the robbers fled in a getaway car that was parked outside of the front doors of the convenience store. Hammond remained in the store to collect cash after the other two robbers fled the scene. When Hammond finally exited the store, the getaway car had already left. Hammond then ran through a neighborhood and found a hiding place inside of a shed. He was located by Kern County Sheriff's Deputies shortly thereafter with money from the robbery next to him. Langston was arrested several days later and acknowledged his role as the getaway driver. Hammond and Langston were both members of the Country Boy Crips criminal street gang, and the jury found that the murders and other were committed in furtherance of gang activity.

The case was primarily investigated by the Kern County Sheriff's Dept. The Bakersfield Police Dept. provided evidence of the defendants' gang affiliation.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, "The possibility of capital punishment is reserved only for the most heinous cases, and for the defendants most directly responsible for the crime. Darnell Hammond, emboldened by other gang members and armed with a firearm burst into a small, family-owned business to victimize and take whatever he pleased. When a father and son tried to protect themselves, each other, and their property, Hammond gunned them down and, apparently unsatisfied that he had taken both of their lives, he remained to scavenge the store to take even more from the men. Hammond had suffered multiple prior convictions, including a prior strike offense for attempted robbery, so while this was not the first time he has victimized Kern County, it should most certainly be his last. Jurors in cases that are eligible for the death penalty carry a heavy burden of having to determine the appropriate punishment for a very serious case, and I respect their verdict and thank them for their service"

Langston's sentencing is scheduled for October 20th, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. in Dept. 3 in front of Judge John Oglesby. He faces life without the possibility of parole.

Hammond's sentencing is scheduled for November 3, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. in Dept. 3 before Judge John Oglesby, where he faces life without the possibility of parole.

Darnell Hammond:



Jim Langston:

