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For Immediate Release

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Violent Bank Robber Sentenced to Prison for Four Armed Heists Committed in Three Years

Defendant Used a Gun to Rob Banks in North County and San Diego

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) said today that a violent and armed bank robber, who terrorized bank employees, made off with hundreds of thousands of dollars, and was eventually convicted by a jury of 30 felony counts in connection with four bank robberies across multiple jurisdictions, has been sentenced to life in prison.

Larry Lightning Jr., 45, was sentenced to 488 years and eight months in prison following a four-week trial that included 76 witnesses and extensive evidence entered into the record. The felony convictions included:

- 10 counts of kidnapping
- 12 counts of assault with a semi-automatic firearm
- 4 counts of robbery
- 3 counts of auto theft
- 1 count of kidnapping for robbery

“This defendant orchestrated a terrifying crime spree that put the lives of bank workers and community members in danger,” said DA Summer Stephan. “Thanks to the dedicated work of our prosecutors and law enforcement partners, he has been held accountable for his crimes and the fear and harm he caused. While the defendant proved elusive for years, law enforcement never gave up its work to solve this string of crimes.”

Beginning in 2019 and over the span of four years, Lightning was the leader in four violent armed take-over robberies across San Diego County. In each of the robberies, he stole a vehicle close in time to the robbery that he used as a getaway car and staged a second vehicle he transferred to less than a mile from the bank, leaving the stolen car behind. Lightning covered himself from head to toe with gloves, a hoodie and a mask before he stormed each bank with his gun drawn, jumping over the teller counter.

The defendant grabbed bank employees by their hair and pulled, pushed, and shoved them into the vault at gunpoint. He yelled at them to go faster, and even counted down, threatening to kill

them if they did not get the safes open fast enough. The victims testified about the fear they felt, with some saying they believed they were going to die, and that they said goodbye to their children. Lightning emptied the vaults of all cash and escaped with almost \$400,000 in total from the robberies.

The case went unsolved with no leads until June 2022, when a DNA hit from the driver's seat of a stolen vehicle came back to the defendant. The FBI performed an extensive follow-up investigation using warrants, surveillance video collection and physical surveillance with the evidence pointing to this defendant. His cell phone records and DNA in each of the stolen cars used in the robberies also contributed to his conviction. After hearing all the evidence and arguments, the jury found defendant Lightning guilty of all counts and allegations, including all the aggravating factors charged in the criminal complaint.

"I want to especially thank Deputy District Attorneys Kristie Nikoletich and Savanah Howe for their outstanding work in presenting a thorough and compelling case to the jury," Stephan said. "Their commitment to justice and protecting our communities along with the support of the DA and law enforcement teams helped ensure this dangerous individual will no longer be a threat."

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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