

330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-4040
SanDiegoDA.com



DWAIN D. WOODLEY
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 843-7977
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315
***En Español* [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305**

Gang Member Sentenced in Shooting Death of Alpha Project Security Guard

Two Victims Were Shot While Coming Back from a Break

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that defendant Johnny Hill, a member of a criminal street gang, was sentenced to 55 years to life plus an additional 26 years in prison in connection with a 2019 shooting that left one man dead and another injured.

Hill and co-defendant, Floyd Garrett, who will be sentenced on January 22, were found guilty by a jury of second-degree murder with a special allegation of personal gun use causing death, assault with a semi-automatic firearm, and being a felon in possession of a firearm on September 14.

“Our office will never stop fighting to make neighborhoods safe from violence,” DA Stephan said. “Ernest Buchanan Jr. was a beloved member of the Alpha Project family and his own family, and his life was mercilessly taken without justification. San Diego Police Department Detectives working with the DA Gangs Unit put this case together piece by piece in order to obtain justice for the victims and hold the offenders accountable. Although this sentence will not bring back Ernest Buchanan Jr., we hope his family finds a measure of justice in the jury verdict and sentence in this case.”

The Alpha Project homeless shelter, located at 1700 Imperial Ave., lies within territory claimed by ‘Crip’ criminal street gang sets and is an area primarily used for gang related drug sales and acts of violence. Over the past two years, San Diego Police have responded to 6,187 calls involving violence: notably, seven homicides, 298 robberies, 1,280 assaults and 1,800 violent disturbances.

In December 2019, Buchanan Jr., and Dorian Cunningham were security guards for the Alpha Project homeless shelter at 1700 Imperial Ave. On the night of the shooting, the men left in Buchanan’s truck to get a snack during their break. In the meantime, the defendants, members of a criminal street gang, arrived in the area in a white sedan. The City of San Diego’s Environmental Street Cameras and the Alpha Project’s surveillance system captured the defendants as they walked together to a dark alcove across from the shelter and waited. When the victims returned and parked their car, Cunningham walked into the administration trailer and Buchanan followed shortly after walking across Imperial Ave. Together, the defendants fired

multiple rounds at Buchanan, and he died shortly thereafter at the hospital. Cunningham was grazed in the leg and did not sustain life threatening injuries. After the shooting, the defendants fled from downtown only six minutes after arriving.

This case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Matthew Carberry with the support of his team.

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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