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For Immediate Release

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DA Charges Defendants Responsible for Violent Pacific Beach Incident

Prosecutors Say Groups Affiliated with ANTIFA Organized from Los Angeles and from San Diego to Carry Out Violence on 16 Victims

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan today announced multiple felony charges against six of the eight people arrested in connection with violent criminal acts committed earlier this year during a demonstration in Pacific Beach on January 9, 2021. Charges against the defendants include conspiracy to commit a riot, illegal use of tear gas, assault by means likely to produce great bodily injury and vandalism. If convicted, the defendants face a sentencing range of probation up to 10 years and eight months in prison.

The defendants who appeared in court today were Luis F. Mora, 30; Joseph Gaskins, 21; Martin Talab, 27; Jeremy White, 39; Bryan Rivera, 21; Brian Lightfoot, 25; and Jesse Cannon, 31. A readiness hearing was set for December 15 and a preliminary hearing is currently set for December 17. The remaining two defendants will be arraigned at a later date. An outstanding arrest warrant exists for the ninth defendant.

The Defendants are self-identified to be affiliated with Anti-fascists or Antifa and in this case organized into two groups, one originating from Los Angeles and the other from San Diego. The defendants began organizing on January 2, 2021 for what they referred to as “Direct Action” against a demonstration to take place on January 9, 2021 in Pacific Beach. Evidence gathered in the investigation shows that Antifa members reference to “Direct Action” means acts of violence such as assault, battery, assault with deadly weapons, arson, and vandalism.

On January 9, the crowd of self-identified Antifa— many of them dressed in all black clothing commonly known as “Black Bloc” and wearing Antifa memorabilia— gathered at the Pacific Beach pier to counter a political demonstration that was referred to as “Patriot March,” in support of the former President. The group wearing all black arrived an hour prior to the scheduled beginning of the “Patriot March.” The group gathered and began to march up and down the boardwalk. On at least eight separate occasions, approximately 15 to 20 members from the counter protesting group (Antifa-affiliated) broke off and surrounded perceived members of the Patriot March group and attacked them using impact weapons and mace. At present, there are 16 known victims.

At one point, a line of 20 to 25 counter protesting individuals advanced on a smaller group of four people from the Patriot March, yelling obscenities at them and screaming for them to run. One member

of the group, who was dressed in black with their face covered, pulled out a can of pepper spray and sprayed it in their faces. The smaller group was attacked with chairs, sticks, glass bottles, full alcohol/beer cans and closed fists as they were chased down the boardwalk.

The Antifa-affiliated group surrounded several minors who they believed to be attending the Patriot March, sprayed them with mace and chased them up the boardwalk, shoving one of the minors to the ground. The minor was surrounded and beaten resulting in the minor victim being taken to the hospital to be treated for a concussion.

In addition to assaults on those participating in the Patriot March, there were collateral victims including a dog that was maced, a journalist attempting to take photos, a business that was vandalized, and assaults on police officers.

Video evidence analysis shows that overwhelmingly the violence in this incident was perpetrated by the Antifa affiliates and was not a mutual fray with both sides crossing out of lawful First Amendment expression into riot and violence.

The San Diego Police Department declared the event an unlawful assembly and demanded that the protestors disperse. The counter protestors threw bottles, eggs, rocks and sprayed at the officers with mace before the crowd was finally broke up.

SDPD, working with the District Attorney's Office, investigated multiple allegations of violent criminal conduct. As a result of those investigations, on December 2, search and arrest warrants were served throughout Los Angeles and San Diego counties.

As in every case, the District Attorney's Office follows the rule of law in bringing charges where the evidence supports it beyond a reasonable doubt regardless of the political orientation of crime victims, as the right to peaceful protest must be protected. When peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters were assaulted in Lemon Grove, the DA's Office brought felony charges and obtained felony convictions.

Anyone who was a victim in the incident who hasn't spoken with law enforcement may contact SanDiegoDA@sdcdca.org

EDITORS: A copy of the criminal complaint filed in this case is attached.

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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.