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For Immediate Release

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DUI Driver Sentenced for Hit and Run That Killed a 19-Month-Old Toddler

Defendant Had Prior DUI Conviction From 2016

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) said today that a defendant who drove drunk, struck and killed a 1-year-old child has been sentenced to 15 years-to-life in prison plus an additional four years in prison for fleeing the scene. Margarito Angeles Vargas, 47, was driving with a blood-alcohol level of more than double the legal limit on September 24, 2022, when he fatally struck the young girl as she crossed a residential street with her sisters and grandparents. A jury convicted Angeles Vargas on November 15, of second-degree murder, gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, DUI causing injury, hit and run causing death, and driving on a suspended license. Judge Amador handed down the sentence in San Diego Superior Court.

On the day of the incident, the defendant was leaving a baby shower when he ran a stop sign and nearly struck a parked truck before barreling down the 3900 block of Redwood Street in City Heights. He struck the victim in broad daylight as her family was walking in an unmarked crosswalk.

Although residential surveillance captured the collision, none of the cameras clearly captured the driver's face or his license plate. A witness chased after the defendant and confronted him. Eventually, the license plate information and cell phone video taken by the witness helped police locate the defendant and arrest him.

“DUI and drugged drivers have taken so many innocent lives this year and while every loss is devastating, the senseless DUI murder of a 1-year-old child is beyond deplorable,” DA Summer Stephan said. “It is also unconscionable that the driver fled the scene, but thanks to the courage and concern of the good Samaritan neighbor who witnessed the crime and recorded the driver and the license plate and provided the information to police, the defendant was brought to justice. Our specialized DUI homicide team worked with San Diego Police Department investigators to present the case to a jury in order to pursue justice. Let this be a warning that drinking and driving can not only take a life but can end with a life prison sentence.”

Because Angeles Vargas had been convicted of a DUI charge previously, he signed a form known as a Watson advisement. The purpose of the Watson advisement is to create a legal record that a defendant is aware of the dangers that DUI poses not only to oneself, but to others.

If a person is involved in another DUI in the future, and that DUI leads to an accident that injures or kills someone, they cannot claim that they didn't understand the consequences. Legally, this means that a defendant can be tried for second-degree murder in a circumstance like this case.

Deputy District Attorney Hailey Williams prosecuted this case.

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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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