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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Second Man Charged with the Murders of Innocent Victims Caught up in Gang Rivalry**

### *Gang-Related Crimes Up Significantly, Proliferation of 'Ghost Guns'*

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office today arraigned Tahjee Ector, 23, of Riverside County on two counts of murder, premeditated attempted murder, shooting into a residence and assault with a firearm in connection with three gang motivated killings that occurred over the past five years. If convicted, he faces life in state prison.

Last month, in connection with same gang motivated crime spree, the District Attorney also charged Kenneth Brooks, 21, with two counts of murder, premeditated attempted murder, shooting into a residence and assault with a firearm.

The charges come as law enforcement officials are reporting a troubling increase in gang-related crime and the proliferation of 'ghost guns'-- firearms that are assembled by hand and are usually untraceable. According to the District Attorney's Office, most of the criminal cases it files involving ghost guns are gang related. Since 2019, the DA's Gangs Division has charged cases involving over 100 ghost guns. At the same time, gang-related cases submitted to the DA's Office by law enforcement countywide are up 25% from same time last year.

Prosecutors say that in May 2016, Ector went to Emerald Hills Park looking for rival gang members to shoot and kill. Believing he had located a rival, Ector shot and killed Kevin Spelmon, 46, as he worked on his car.

Four years later, in May 2020, Ector continued to kill on behalf of his gang. Ector and Brooks engaged in an ongoing conspiracy with other gang members, where they armed themselves with automatic handguns and again attempted to locate, shoot and kill rivals. Their mission culminated in the murder of an innocent victim, Arif Abdalla, 28.

Brooks went in search of rivals in Emerald Hills Park, in May 2021, this time, resulting in the murder of Tamara Shellum, another innocent victim.

The spike in gang-related crime and the widespread use of untraceable guns by gangs needs to be addressed through prevention and prosecution," said District Attorney Summer Stephan. "We won't allow gangs to terrorize any of our neighborhoods in San Diego County and we are

dedicated to working with our law enforcement partners to stem the alarming uptick in gang-related violence.”

Recently, the San Diego Police Department said it is on pace this year to nearly double the number of ghost guns they impounded last year. Of every five guns police seize, one is a ghost gun.

“Preventing and addressing gang-related crime and the use of ghost guns is a priority for the San Diego Police Department,” said San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit. “I would like to thank our Homicide Unit, Gang Investigators, and Special Operations Unit for tirelessly working to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice.”

In addition, gang shootings are up 129% over the same period last year. Below is a comparison of the first six months of 2021 with the same period in 2020, based on data from the San Diego Police Department.

- 39 shootings compared with 17 last year, a 129% increase
- Three attempted murder cases compared to one last year
- 34 assaults with a deadly weapon compared to 19 last year
- Nine drive-by shootings compared to two last year

Ector pleaded not guilty to the charges. He is scheduled for a bail review hearing on July 6 at 8:30 a.m. and a preliminary hearing on hearing on July 14 at 8:30 a.m.

Brooks is scheduled to be in court on July 20 at 8:30 a.m. for a status hearing.

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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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