



GENE HARRIS
CHIEF OF POLICE

NEWS RELEASE

PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MURDER CHARGES FOR ANGELES CREST HIGHWAY JULY HOMICIDE

Pasadena, CA – On July 22, 2023, at 3:21 AM, 32-year-old Jessie Munoz of Los Angeles was murdered during a robbery at Mile Marker 28.36 on Angeles Crest Highway. Munoz was inside a vehicle with a female companion at a scenic viewpoint when the homicide occurred.

Detectives from the Pasadena Police Department's Robbery / Homicide Unit (RHU) responded to the homicide scene to commence immediate follow-up investigation. RHU detectives followed investigative leads and quickly identified suspects and a suspect vehicle involved in the homicide.

On July 25, 2023, RHU detectives coordinated an operation involving multiple specialized law enforcements units. At 10:15 PM, the arrest aspect of the operation was initiated, and five male adult suspects were taken into custody without incident. Two semi-automatic firearms were recovered from the interior portion of the vehicle. One of those firearms was later confirmed to be the weapon used to murder Munoz. A female suspect was simultaneously taken into custody in Los Angeles and a search warrant was executed at multiple locations.

On July 28, 2023, the District Attorney's Office filed two counts of Penal Code 211 (Robbery) with handgun allegations on **Luis Ventura**; a 23-year-old Los Angeles resident. He was charged with robbing Jessie Munoz and his female companion. Bail was set at \$150,000 under court case BA516784.

20-year-old **Wendy Cerritos** and 21-year-old **Rossel Josue Hernandez**, both Los Angeles residents, were charged with four counts and two counts respectively, of Penal Code 211 (Robbery) with handgun allegations. Bail was set at \$300,000 for Cerritos and \$150,000 for Hernandez under court case BA516787. Cerritos and Hernandez were charged for robberies that occurred on Angeles Crest Highway the week preceding Munoz' murder.

Following the initial criminal filing, RHU detectives continued to investigate leads and obtain additional evidence.

On August 29, 2023, RHU detectives organized and coordinated a multi-location arrest and search warrant operation. During the operation, 21-year-old *Abraham Ernesto Alvarenga Cortez* and 18-year-old *Marco Antonio Hernandez* were arrested without incident.

On August 31, 2023, RHU detectives met with prosecutors again from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. The District Attorney's Office amended the felony complaint under BA516784. Ventura, Cortez, and Marco Hernandez were each charged with one count of Penal Code 187 (Murder) and two counts of Penal Code 211 (Robbery). These charges are related to the murder and robbery of Munoz and his female companion. Bail was set at \$2,100,000 for all three.

All the above-mentioned suspects are members of the Mara Salvatrucha criminal street gang (MS-13). RHU detectives believe the suspects are connected to a series of violent crimes that have occurred in Los Angeles County.

The U.S. Marshals Pacific Southwest Regional Fugitive Apprehension Taskforce, the FBI / LAPD / LASD Gang Taskforce, and LAPD's RHD assisted with the arrest / warrant operation.

"Thanks to the Pasadena PD Robbery Homicide Unit, the LA County District Attorney's Office, and the many other participants in this complex investigation," Chief Harris said. This is a tragedy of the highest order for the family and friends of the victims in this case and our hearts go out to them as they cope in the aftermath. I can only hope the efforts of all involved can bring a measure of closure during their healing."

Anyone with information about this case is encouraged to call the Pasadena Police at (626)-744-4241 or report information anonymously by contacting "Crime Stoppers" at (800) 222-TIPS (8477), via your smartphone by downloading the "P3 Tips" Mobile APP on Google Play or the Apple App Store, or by using the website <http://lacrimestoppers.org>.

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