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PRESS RELEASE

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

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DATE: February 18, 2022

Tyler Seng Saephan Found Guilty of 1st Degree Murder



Late afternoon Thursday, February 17, 2022, a Merced County jury found Tyler Seng Saephan guilty of first degree murder and using a firearm during the commission of the offense. Mr. Saephan was also found guilty of robbery while armed with a firearm, theft of a firearm, possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, and possession of ammunition by a prohibited person.

The charges stemmed from an early morning incident on August 7, 2015. Mr. Saephan

arranged to meet Adrian Christopher Ayala to purchase marijuana, but during the meeting, the defendant instead robbed Mr. Ayala and shot him at least four times. Mr. Adrian's mother ultimately found her son face down and unresponsive on the street in front of their home. Mr. Saephan had already fled the scene. Mr. Adrian was fatally wounded by the gunshots, which included one to the center of his chest and another to his back.

Prosecutors presented evidence to the jury that three weeks prior to the shooting, Mr. Saephan stole the firearm he later used in the murder. Mr. Saephan had a criminal history prohibiting him from legally possessing firearms and ammunition. Merced Police Department Detective Moses Nelson, who is now a District Attorney Investigator, was the lead investigator on the case. Mr. Saephan avoided capture until September of 2017. Upon Mr. Saephan's arrest, the case was submitted to the District Attorney's Office for review and filing. The case was delayed for trial at various points due to witness and judicial availability, the COVID pandemic, and Mr. Saephan's decision twice to retain a new attorney. Retired Merced County Superior Court Judge Ronald Hanson presided over the case. Mr. Saephan is scheduled to appear in front of Judge Hansen for sentencing at 8:30 a.m. on March 18, 2022.

Nataly Enero and Nicole Silveira of the District Attorney's Office prosecuted the case. They issued the following joint statement:

We are grateful to the jury for their service and careful deliberations in this matter. We commend the Merced Police Department for a thorough investigation, leading to this conviction. This day has been long awaited by Mr. Adrian's family, and we hope it helps to provide them with some measure of closure as they move forward.