



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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FUGITIVE WANTED IN COACHELLA MURDER NEARLY A DECADE AGO HAS BEEN RETURNED TO RIVERSIDE COUNTY FROM MEXICO TO BE PROSECUTED

INDIO – Today, Jan. 10, 2014, a fugitive wanted in the April 2004 murder of a man in Coachella was returned to Riverside County where he will now face justice for the crime.

Walter Cuevas Gastelum, DOB: 3-19-84, of Mexico, is charged in case INF047843, with one count of murder with an enhancement of personally using a firearm in connection with the death of Manuel Ley, whose body was found inside a residence on Van Buren Street in Coachella on April 12, 2004. The weapon believed used in Ley's murder was a shotgun. Gastelum fled the United States after the murder and was believed to be in Mexico.

Riverside County District Attorney's investigators assigned to the U.S. Marshal's Pacific Regional Fugitive Task Force provided information to Mexican law enforcement authorities as to the possible whereabouts of the fugitive. On June 12, 2013, Gastelum was apprehended in Sonora, Mexico on the outstanding murder warrant. Gastelum fought extradition to the U.S., but on Dec. 30, 2013, that was denied. The morning of Jan. 10, 2014, members of the Fugitive Task Force picked up Gastelum in Mexico City and flew back to Los Angeles International Airport with the wanted man. He was then transported to Indio to be interviewed and booked.

An investigation at the time of the murder revealed the following: On April 11, 2004 -- the day before the victim's body was found -- Gastelum was at his aunt's home and told her that he had killed someone at his uncle's ranch. Gastelum then reportedly took keys to his aunt's boyfriend's car without permission and fled. That car was found in Mexico on April 15, 2004. It is believed, based on interviews done by homicide investigators after the murder, that there had been some sort of disagreement or argument between Gastelum and the victim after which Gastelum shot and killed Ley.

There is no information available at this time about the date or courtroom for Gastelum's arraignment.