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NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**PALM SPRINGS MAN BEING CHARGED
WITH THE MURDER OF WOMAN IN HER RIVERSIDE HOME**

RIVERSIDE – Today, Jan. 14, 2021, the DA’s Office submitted charges to the court against a Palm Springs man for the murder of a 78-year-old woman in her Riverside home last week.

Our office has made a filing decision in the case of Sixto Jesus Garcia Pena, DOB: 5-13-01, and submitted the case to Riverside County Superior Court on Thursday morning.

Our office is filing one count of first-degree murder and three special circumstance allegations – murder during the commission of a robbery, murder during the commission of a burglary, and torture. The special circumstance allegations make the defendant eligible for the death penalty. A decision whether to seek the death penalty will be made on a future date by District Attorney Mike Hestrin.

The case is expected to be filed by the Riverside County Superior Court tomorrow morning, Jan. 15, 2021. Garcia Pena is expected to be arraigned tomorrow as well, though those details are not available until the case is filed by the court.

Garcia Pena is being charged with the murder of Denise Irene Wong, 78. Her body was found the evening of Jan. 6, 2021, by Riverside police officers who were sent to her home on Manfield Street in Riverside to check on her after family members became concerned about her welfare.

The investigation revealed that the victim had been murdered hours earlier during a home invasion robbery during which her vehicle was taken. The same vehicle was involved in a hit-and-run collision in Indio on Jan. 6 and Garcia Pena was identified as the suspect.

The Riverside Police Department requested the assistance of the Gang Impact Team (GIT) early in this investigation. GIT, which is supervised by the DA’s Office, was assigned to locate Garcia Pena and recover any evidence related to the crime. GIT members conducted numerous hours of surveillance and were able to retrace his whereabouts from the traffic collision in Indio directly to a residential neighborhood, also in Indio. The vehicle led GIT to information that helped identify Garcia Pena as the suspect in the homicide and resulted in the recovery of property taken from the victim.

On Jan. 9, investigators determined that Garcia Pena had been arrested in Imperial County in an attempted vehicle theft case. On Jan. 13, Garcia Pena was transferred from that county to Riverside County to face charges here.

“We are proud of the great work that our Gang Impact Team does and how quickly they were able to determine the whereabouts of the suspect wanted in this horrific murder,” said DA Mike Hestrin. “While the Gang Impact Team has a primary mission of working major cases involving criminal street gangs, they also can be used to track down wanted suspects, particularly murder suspects.”

The case is being prosecuted by Deputy DA Meghan MacDonald of the DA’s Homicide Trial Team.

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