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Lopez Found Guilty of Murdering Man Guarding Vehicle After Damage Found
People v. Rafael Lopez Lopez: Kern County Superior Court Case BF193330A

(Bakersfield) - Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant conviction. On February 28, 2024, a Kern County jury found Rafael Lopez Lopez age 39, guilty of the first-degree murder of Rafael Gonzales, with an enhancement for use of a firearm. The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Larry L. Fields.

Rafael Gonzales, the victim's brother, and victim's girlfriend were at the Kwik Serve gas station on Baker and 19th Street across the street from the Montecito Club watching over parked cars as a part time job. As the victim sat to the front of the Kwik Serve, Lopez walked into the parking lot armed with a short barrel, fully automatic AR-15 style rifle and fired thirteen rounds, striking the victim. The victim was struck 8 times and died at the scene.

The victim's brother told the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) that a few months prior while watching parked cars, the victim had gotten into an argument with a person whose vehicle had suffered minor damage in the lot. Police identified the vehicle and traced it to Lopez's residence. During the search pursuant to a search warrant at the residence, BPD located the gun, cell phones, clothing and ammunition that matched with the crime scene.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating, "These extreme acts of violence with illegal firearms require the fullest prosecution under the law. We will seek the maximum sentence for this horrendous crime."

Sentencing is set for March 7, 2024, before the honorable Judge Judith Dulcich in Department 2 of the Kern County Superior Court. Valdez faces up to 25 years to life in prison for the murder, plus 25 years to life for the gun enhancement, plus 8 months for use of a deadly weapon during the crime.

Rafael Lopez Lopez:

