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Mercer County Homicide Task Force Investigation Leads to Charges in July Homicide in Trenton

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri announced today that the Mercer County Homicide Task Force has filed murder charges against Michael Owens for the July 17, 2020 shooting death of Luis X. Gonzalez.

Owens, 28, of Trenton, is charged with first-degree murder, second-degree possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, second-degree unlawful possession of a weapon and second-degree certain persons not to possess a weapon. He was served his complaints at the Mercer County Correction Center where has been held since July 24 after he was taken into custody for aggravated assault and theft by unlawful taking. Owens was charged with these offenses in Hamilton Township on July 17. According to the New Jersey Department of Corrections website, Owens was released on parole from state prison on June 1, 2020.

The prosecutor's office has filed a detention motion in the murder case. Owens is scheduled to appear in court on Monday, August 3, for a detention hearing on the Hamilton assault charges.

The murder charges are the result of an investigation by the Mercer County Homicide Task Force.

On July 17, 2020, just before 9 p.m., Trenton police received calls for shots fired and a male shot in the middle of the street in the 1000 block of South Broad Street. Officers arrived on scene and located the victim, later identified as 37-year-old Gonzalez, in the middle of the street suffering from multiple gunshots to the torso. He was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

The investigation revealed that the victim was at home in his South Broad Street residence just prior to being shot. He left his house while on his cell phone and was shot shortly thereafter.

The victim's cell phone was recovered by hospital staff and turned over to police. Investigation revealed that a cell phone number repeatedly contacted Gonzalez in the hour before and immediately prior to his murder. Officers also recovered .380 caliber shell casings at the scene of the shooting.

Detectives were able to locate numerous cameras in the area of the shooting and ascertain that Gonzalez walked directly from the area in front of his residence toward a vehicle and was shot several seconds later. Based on the video, the vehicle appeared to be a black Chevy Malibu which had recently been reported stolen in Hamilton. Investigation into the stolen vehicle led homicide detectives to a domestic violence incident that occurred in Hamilton on July 17, 2020. This incident involved an argument between Owens and his girlfriend that became physical. Owens placed his hand around his girlfriend's neck in an attempt to stop the blood circulation. When the victim was able to escape his grasp, Owens fled the residence and took her cell phone so she couldn't contact the police. Further investigation revealed the reason for the altercation was that Owens discovered Gonzalez's number in his girlfriend's phone and confronted her about it. The victim's mother is the registered owner of a black Chevy Malibu and Owens also took the keys to the vehicle when he left the house. Images obtained during the homicide investigation confirm distinctive features of this Malibu match those of the Malibu involved in Gonzalez's murder.

Detectives were also able to obtain surveillance video from the Roadrunner Gas Station on Brunswick Avenue from July 17, approximately 25 minutes before the murder, when the Chevy Malibu pulled in for gas. Owens was positively identified as the driver who exited the vehicle.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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