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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Re: Sentencing For Assault on Police Officer Trial Conviction: Christopher Newsom: BF182802A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a substantial prison sentence in a case involving assault with a deadly weapon on a peace officer.

On July 1, 2021, in a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Hunter E. Starr, Kern County Superior Court Judge Zulfa sentenced Christopher Newsom to 22 years in the prison. The sentence was the result of the convictions in the current case, which were enhanced by a previous “strike” offense on Newsom’s record for witness intimidation stemming from a 2015 felony conviction.

On October 15, 2020, deputies from the Kern County Sheriff’s Office attempted to stop Christopher Newsom for driving recklessly and operating a motor vehicle without a license plate. At the time, Newsom was on parole, driving a stolen truck and carrying a loaded sawed-off shotgun in the truck. Newsom refused to pull over after the Sheriff’s Department attempted to initiate a traffic stop. During a lengthy vehicle pursuit lasting upwards of half an hour, Newsom charged deputies with his vehicle. At one point, a Kern County resident saw Newsom driving toward a Sheriff’s Deputy who was out of his vehicle and pulled that deputy to safety. When Newsom finally came to a stop, he fled on foot from the stolen truck and led deputies on a pursuit through backyards as the Sheriff’s Helicopter kept watch. With the assistance of a K9 unit, Newsom was finally taken into custody.

A Kern County jury convicted Newsom of several counts in a jury trial that ended in early June 2021, including possession of a stolen vehicle, reckless evasion of a peace officer with a motor vehicle, assault with a vehicle on a peace officer, unlawful firearms possession, resisting arrest, and hit and run. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on additional counts, which included additional assaults and brandishing of a weapon charges.

During the sentencing, Judge Zulfa commented that Newsom had posed a significant risk of injury or death not only to the deputies but also to himself and members of the public, and that it was thanks largely to the training and discipline of the Kern County Sheriff's Deputies involved that the case did not end tragically.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction and sentence, stating: "Intentionally trying to ram a peace officer with a vehicle is a major crime that puts officers in grave danger. Crimes that endanger the lives of both peace officers and the community at large warrant an elevated sentence to protect public safety and ensure that such crimes are not tolerated and permitted to again put lives at risk."

Based upon the substantial sentence imposed, the charges for which the jury did not reach a verdict were dismissed in the interest of justice.