



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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Motel 6 Shooter Pleads to First Degree Murder

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced that one of the three suspects charged with the murder of 41-year-old John David Noonan of Chico pled no contest to First Degree Murder in Butte County Superior Court today.

Eric Allen, 38, of Chico, was previously charged with the homicide of Noonan, which occurred in the rear parking lot of a motel in Chico on the afternoon of January 23, 2020. It was alleged that Allen fired a handgun twice at close range at Noonan, hitting him both times.

At the preliminary hearing in the case, evidence was presented that Allen admitted to others that he shot the victim from the back seat of a vehicle being driven by his co-defendant, Justin Cozakas, 35, while the third co-defendant, Monica Ruggiero, 35, sat in the front passenger seat.

Ramsey said testimony presented at the two-day preliminary hearing revealed that Noonan had stolen drugs and money from his then-girlfriend, Ruggiero, in January 2020 ending their relationship. Ramsey said Ruggiero then enlisted Cozakas and Allen to find Noonan either to get the money and drugs back or to wreak revenge upon him. Text messages from Ruggiero's phone confirmed she lured Noonan to the parking lot of the Motel 6 on Manzanita Court. Noonan arrived alone in his vehicle and the others arrived in a separate vehicle driven by Cozakas with Ruggiero in the front passenger seat and Allen in the rear passenger seat. The cars parked next to each other in a rear lot.

Ramsey said further testimony at the hearing established Noonan got out of his vehicle and approached Cozakas as Cozakas remained in the driver's seat of his vehicle. A verbal argument ensued at Cozakas' open driver's window between the two men until Cozakas rolled up the window and at the same time put down his rear passenger drivers-side window. At that time, Allen produced a handgun and shot Noonan from the rear passenger seat. Noonan died in the parking lot as the others fled the scene in their car. Chico Police detectives later captured them in February 2020 after an intensive investigation.

Sentencing is set for March 9, 2022. Allen remains in custody without bail. He faces 25 years to life in prison. However, Ramsey noted that due to the recent "Elder Parole Program" enacted by the legislature, Allen would qualify to seek parole after only twenty years of custody.

Cozakas and Ruggiero will be back in court on February 2, 2022, to set a new jury trial date after the COVID-19 pandemic caused their cases to be continued.

Allen, Eric



Cozakas, Justin



Ruggiero, Monica

