



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 16, 2017 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney
Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org
Bilingual Spanish Representative Available
At: (530) 666-8416

Washington Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Murder

(Woodland, CA) - November 16, 2017 - District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that on November 15, 2017 Yolo County Superior Court Judge David Reed sentenced 23-year-old Thomas Phillip Leae of Renton, Washington to life in state prison.

On October 5, 2015, Leae stole a 1999 Honda from the son of a neighbor in Auburn, Washington. This car was used by Leae and his girlfriend, Ailiana Siufanua, to conduct surveillance and later rob and murder a jewelry store owner in Vancouver, Washington on November 25, 2015. Ms. Siufanua had entered the jewelry store with a loaded gun and shot the owner when he tried to resist. Video surveillance of the robbery showed her then proceed to take cash, jewelry and silver antiques. Leae was waiting outside in the Honda. He drove away with Ms. Siufanua from the robbery leaving the owner for dead. The Vancouver Police Department alerted media outlets in the surrounding areas to put out photos of the couple within 48 hours of the murder. Fearing their capture, the couple fled south in the stolen Honda until they were noticed speeding late at night by California Highway Patrol officers in Glenn County on Southbound Interstate 5.

A high speed chase ensued through three California counties with speeds reaching 110 miles per hour. In Arbuckle, Leae exited the freeway and spun out as a result of maneuvers by the California Highway Patrol. Leae then took further evasive action by entering the freeway headed Southbound, but in the Northbound lanes. Leae drove with no lights on in the opposite direction for eight miles at speeds reaching 80 miles per hour. The California Highway Patrol Officers fearing that a head on collision was likely and used their high powered spot lights to illuminate Leae's blacked out car. A witness from Arbuckle testified at trial that during that evening she was heading home from a Sacramento Kings game. She noticed big rigs in front of her flashing their high beams and from out of nowhere she saw Leae's car heading toward her head on. She swerved just in time to avoid the head on collision. She told the jury that to this day she rarely drives on the freeway due to the fear she has that she was going to die that night.

Leae drove through Yolo County until he reached the Tony Diaz Memorial Rest Stop in Dunnigan. Officers from the California Highway Patrol Multi-Disciplinary Accident Investigation Team testified that while traveling at 82 miles per hour into the rest stop Leae realized he could not negotiate the turn and slammed on his brakes. The 1999 Honda hit a tree at the exit of the rest stop at 66 miles per hour. Leae was seriously injured and his passenger, Ms. Siufanua, who was not wearing her seat belt was killed. Ms. Siufanua was 18-years-old and was from Des Moines, Washington.

On October 6, 2017 a Yolo County Jury convicted Leae of second degree murder, evading a peace officer causing injury or death and vehicle theft. Judge Reed sentenced Leae to 15-years-to-life in state prison for the murder and an additional 10 years and eight months for the other charges.

Deanna Hays prosecuted the case. “The lengths to which Mr. Leae was willing to go to escape capture by law enforcement cost his passenger her life, but also endangered dozens of motorists on a well-traveled freeway,” said Hays. “Thankfully, due to swift actions of the California Highway Patrol Officers pursuing him, they were able to save the lives of the other motorists.”

Districted Attorney Jeff Reisig praised the team effort of law enforcement. “The CHP did an excellent job investigating this case. Also, District Attorney staff including our DA investigator, legal secretaries and prosecutors spent countless hours preparing this case for trial to assist the jury in making its decision.”

###