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Three Suspects Charged in Deadly Santa Barbara Stabbing Incident Over Fiesta Weekend

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— Categories: Crime



Three men are now facing multiple felony charges after a deadly stabbing incident that took place in the early hours of August 1 in downtown Santa Barbara. The charges were formally announced by Santa Barbara County District Attorney John Savrnoch on Tuesday, marking a significant development in the investigation.

The suspects, 28-year-old Juan Fernando Rios, 30-year-old Sergio Rivas, and 29-year-old Luis Gerardo Terrazas, were arrested following a violent altercation on the 500 block of State Street. The incident, which happened just after midnight during the city's busy Fiesta celebrations, resulted in one fatality and left two other individuals hospitalized with serious but not life-threatening injuries.

Law enforcement officers from the Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD), who were already patrolling the area due to Fiesta festivities, were alerted by a passerby about a fight involving a knife. Officers had been assisting an unrelated intoxicated individual nearby, but quickly redirected their attention to the reported disturbance.

Upon arrival, officers encountered one of the victims suffering from stab wounds to the torso. Another victim was found collapsed nearby, also with stab injuries, and a third was later located during the search. Emergency aid was administered at the scene, and all three were transported to Cottage Hospital.

Despite efforts to save him, 28-year-old Anthony Bisquera-Hartley died from his injuries. He leaves behind three young children. A fundraising campaign organized by his family has already raised \$38,000 toward its \$40,000 goal to help cover funeral and other expenses.

The other two victims have not been fully identified, with one referred to only as "J. Ramos." The name of the third victim remains undisclosed.

According to police reports, detectives launched their investigation immediately after the stabbing, collecting physical evidence, including knives, clothing, and blood samples. Authorities say arrests were made within hours of the incident, beginning with Terrazas, who was reportedly also injured in the stabbing and taken into custody at the hospital.

Further arrests were made over the weekend as detectives linked Rios and Rivas to the crime. Rivas was apprehended while allegedly in possession of a handgun, multiple loaded magazines, and a quantity of cocaine. All three suspects are now in custody at the Santa Barbara County Jail, each held on multimillion-dollar bail.

Rivas faces the most serious list of charges, including murder with gang enhancement allegations and personal use of a knife. He is also charged with assault with a deadly weapon against victim J. Ramos, in addition to several firearm and drug-related offenses.

According to custody records, Rivas previously served time for second-degree robbery and was listed as a registered gang member as part of his sentence.

Rios, who has a prior criminal history in Santa Barbara, including a 2018 stabbing case that led to a four-year prison term, is also being charged with murder and gang enhancement allegations. In addition, he faces charges for committing a felony while out on bail for another offense and for possessing a firearm as a convicted felon. He had been arrested just days before the stabbing on separate gun-related crimes.

Terrazas is being charged with the attempted murder of Rivas. Prosecutors are pursuing enhancements, including allegations that the crime was committed for the benefit of a criminal street gang and involved personal use of a knife.

All three men appeared in Santa Barbara Superior Court on Tuesday, August 5, for their arraignment. The case is now proceeding through the court system, and further hearings are expected as prosecutors prepare for trial.