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NEWS RELEASE

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Feb. 21, 2019

Murder, Assault Upon Peace Officer Charges Filed After Pursuit in Whittier

A man was charged today with murder and assaulting police officers after a pursuit ended in a crash that killed a 61-year-old motorist, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Kevin Vargas (dob 8/12/94) of Santa Fe Springs faces one count each of murder, fleeing a pursuing peace officer's motor vehicle causing death and hit-and-run driving resulting in death as well as four counts of assault upon a peace officer.

Case VA150032 includes an allegation that Vargas was out on his own recognizance in an unrelated case charging him with one felony count of fleeing a peace officer's motor vehicle while driving recklessly and two misdemeanor DUI counts.

Arraignment is scheduled today in Department 4 of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Bellflower Branch.

On Feb. 18, the defendant allegedly sped away from an officer attempting to conduct a traffic stop in Whittier, prosecutors said. During the pursuit, Vargas reportedly drove onto a dead-end street but made a U-turn and drove toward the police vehicles pursuing him, prosecutors added.

The chase ended when the defendant's vehicle crashed into an SUV being driven by Isaias Rodrigues Cruz near the corner of Wardman Street and Pickering Avenue. Cruz died as a result of his injuries.

Vargas faces a possible maximum sentence of 27 years to life in state prison if convicted as charged. Bail is scheduled at more than \$2.4 million.

The case remains under investigation by the Whittier Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.