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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Sentenced to LWOP for Arranging Wife's Brutal Murder in 1991

A 57-year-old man was sentenced today to life in state prison without the possibility of parole for orchestrating his wife's killing in their San Dimas home more than 25 years ago, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On Jan. 24, a jury found Shanker Chhaganbahi Patel guilty of first-degree murder after a 2 1/2 month trial. Jurors also found true the special circumstance allegation of lying in wait.

Deputy District Attorney John Monaghan, who prosecuted the case, said on the afternoon of Nov. 19, 1991, Usha Patel, 29, was on her way to pick up her 7-year-old daughter from school when she was attacked in the garage of the couple's San Dimas home.

The assailant fatally stabbed the victim in the chest and neck, duct taped her mouth and nose and bound her feet. The attacker then placed the victim's body in the trunk of her car and drove the vehicle to a nearby middle school, where he abandoned the car. Later that day, a sheriff's deputy saw Usha Patel's vehicle and discovered her body inside, the prosecutor said.

Although authorities thoroughly investigated the slaying, the case eventually went cold. In 2010, detectives returned to the then 19-year-old cold case and reexamined evidence found at the homicide scene, including gloves discovered in the front passenger seat of the victim's car, the prosecutor added.

Using the California DNA Data Bank Program, law enforcement linked DNA found inside the gloves to Miguel Angel Garcia, 66. In June 2012, Garcia was charged with Usha Patel's fatal stabbing and subsequently pleaded no contest to first-degree murder. Garcia was sentenced on May 10, 2013, to 25 years to life in state prison.

The investigation further revealed that in the fall of 1991, Shanker Patel paid a middle man \$7,500 to organize his wife's murder. The defendant told the co-conspirator when and where to be in the family's home to kill Usha Patel, the prosecutor said.

The middle man provided these details to Garcia, who then carried out the planned killing, according to the prosecutor.

In February 2013, Shanker Patel was charged with capital murder. The defendant was apprehended in Atlanta and returned to California to face criminal prosecution for Usha Patel's killing.

According to evidence presented at trial, the defendant was having an affair on his wife prior to the killing. Additionally, Usha Patel, a law school student, was planning to leave her husband after she passed the California Bar Exam.

Case KA100865 was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's 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.