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PRESS RELEASE

Defendant Hakeem Smith
Arrested in West Fallowfield Homicide

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced the capture and arrest of defendant Hakeem Smith for the murder of Sam Algarin on September 13, 2018. Algarin's lifeless body was found on the side of the road in West Fallowfield Township, dead from a single gunshot wound to the chest. During the course of an intensive multi-day investigation, police eventually located video of the defendant with the victim's vehicle minutes after the murder, the defendant's palm print on the vehicle after the vehicle was abandoned, and the defendant's fingerprint on the victim's phone discarded in a field near the body.

The defendant is 30 years old. He last resided at 234 Conowingo Circle, Oxford, Pennsylvania.

District Attorney Tom Hogan stated, "This was a senseless and cold-blooded killing. The defendant needed a car and money, so he killed an innocent victim to get what he wanted. Sam Algarin was a good father to his children, a good son to his mother, a good worker to his employer, and a friend to everybody he met. The defendant killed the victim and dumped him on the side of the road like trash. Now the defendant will face justice."

West Fallowfield Police Chief Charles “Smoke” Wilmont added, “This was a great team effort by the West Fallowfield Police Department and Chester County District Attorney’s Office. West Fallowfield is a quiet and peaceful rural area, and we seldom see violence like this. However, the entire team came together to investigate and arrest the defendant. My thoughts and prayers go out to Sam Algarin’s family.”

The allegations of the criminal complaint are as follows:¹

On September 13, 2018, defendant Hakeem Smith was living with his mother at 234 Conowingo Circle in Oxford, Pennsylvania. The defendant got into a domestic dispute with his mother, resulting in the police being called and the defendant being removed from the residence. The defendant left the residence on foot that evening, carrying bags of his belongings. The defendant did not have a car. The defendant was in close proximity to a Starbucks in Oxford.

Starbucks was where the victim Sam Algarin had parked his vehicle, a GMC Terrain, that same evening. The victim worked until 6:00 p.m. at a local automobile dealership, where he was a long-time employee. The victim then parked his vehicle at the Starbucks. The victim, the victim’s two sons, and the victim’s mother then drove to a martial arts class in the victim’s mother’s car, with the class lasting until 9:00 p.m. The victim, his mother, and his kids then picked up pizza from a local shop at 9:12 p.m. At approximately 9:30 – 9:40 p.m., the victim’s mother dropped the victim off at the Starbucks to pick up his parked vehicle. She drove the children back to her house, where the victim was supposed to meet them. The victim never returned.

Instead, police found the victim’s body on the side of Limestone Road in West Fallowfield Township, Chester County. The victim was dead from a single gunshot wound to the chest. The victim’s vehicle, wallet, and phone were all missing. Police identified the victim using fingerprint technology.

The discovery of Sam Algarin’s body triggered an intensive, around-the-clock, multi-day investigation by the Chester County Detectives, West Fallowfield Police Department, and multiple assisting agencies.

¹ A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

Police checked video in surrounding businesses over a wide area. After reviewing hours of recordings, they located video from a Turkey Hill store that recorded the defendant Hakeem Smith showing up at the store at 9:46 p.m. driving the victim's GMC Terrain. This was minutes after the victim's mother dropped off the victim at the Starbucks. The video showed that the defendant was unfamiliar with the vehicle, not realizing what side the gas tank was on and exhibiting confusion about how to open the gas tank.

Police recovered the victim's vehicle in Westtown Township, Chester County, on September 16, 2018. The vehicle had been abandoned and intentionally wiped down, but the police located blood on the driver's seat and driver's seatbelt harness. The police also found the defendant's palm print on one of the door windows.

Police engaged in an extensive and meticulous search of the region around where the victim's body was found. Eventually, they located the victim's phone, discarded in a field along a road approximately two miles from where the victim's body was located. After processing the victim's phone, police discovered the defendant's fingerprint on the discarded phone.

The defendant was taken into custody in West Chester, Pennsylvania, on September 18, 2018. He was spotted on the street by a West Chester police officer, fled into a residence, but later surrendered to the West Chester SWAT team.

The defendant has been charged with murder, robbery, and related offenses. He is not eligible for bail and was remanded to Chester County Prison.

This case was investigated by the West Fallowfield Police Department and Chester County Detectives. Assistance was provided by the Oxford Police Department, the West Chester Police Department, the West Chester SWAT team, and the United States Marshals Service. The assigned prosecutor is Brian Burack. Anybody with more information should contact Chester County Detective Bob Balchunis at (610) 344-6866.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan