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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHARGES FILED IN LOS BANOS SHOOTING

Two Los Banos teenagers have been charged in connection with crimes committed on July 20, 2013 that ultimately resulted in the shooting of Bidal Taito, 17, who was killed while attempting to burglarize a downtown residence, Merced County District Attorney Larry D. Morse II announced Friday.

Brandon Lippincott, 17, was charged Thursday with conspiracy to commit robbery, attempted robbery and first degree burglary following a lengthy investigation by the Los Banos Police Department and the California Department of Justice. Although a juvenile, Lippincott will be prosecuted as an adult, Morse said. A second suspect, a 15-year old male, has been charged with the same crimes. He will be prosecuted in juvenile court, Morse said.

During the course of the investigation, detectives determined that Taito, Lippincott, and the other juvenile met at Taito's residence on July 20th and planned the burglary of a residence on West K Street. A video surveillance camera filmed Lippincott and the other juvenile "casing" the residence earlier in the day, Morse said.

When the three juveniles got together at Taito's residence early that evening, Lippincott produced a loaded .22 caliber semi-automatic pistol, and he and Taito donned one glove each to handle the pistol and made plans for the robbery. The three juveniles met later that evening and set out for the residence on West K Street. The occupant of the West K Street residence had arrived home moments before the three juveniles approached the house.

The resident later told police that shortly after arriving home he was startled to hear banging on the outside of his house and when he looked toward his front door from his bedroom he saw someone trying to enter his front door. He grabbed his cell phone and his .40 caliber handgun and called 911. As he was on the phone, he saw an intruder enter his home. He can be heard on the 911 tape describing for the dispatch operator what was taking place, followed by the sound of three gunshots which he admitted firing. It was later determined that both Lippincott and Taito had entered or attempted to enter the home.

Taito, wearing all black clothing, was struck in the lower right side of his back by a bullet which first penetrated the front door. Department of Justice investigators, who were called to the scene that night by Los Banos Police Chief Gary Brizzee, determined that the door was opened approximately 30 degrees at the time the shots were fired. Taito fled into an adjacent alleyway, dropping his gloves and a cell phone. The .22 caliber pistol was found on the ground a short distance away. Taito collapsed in the alleyway and died at a Modesto hospital shortly after 1 a.m.

Taito had told the first officers to arrive on the scene that he was alone and had been shot while walking down the alleyway. The investigation by the Los Banos detectives and the Department of Justice established that Taito's statements were false, that he had conspired with Lippincott and the other juvenile to commit the robbery and that he was shot while in either the threshold of the front door or within a few feet.

The shooting of Taito by the resident has been determined by the District Attorney's office to be justified, Morse said.

"This case is a tragedy for all concerned. First degree burglary is one of the most serious crimes in our system precisely because it can lead to what happened here. Anyone, juvenile or adult, who considers robbing a person in his home or burglarizing a residence, should well understand that they are putting their life in jeopardy. A bedrock foundation of the law is that a person is entitled to be secure in his own home and may use deadly force to protect himself and his loved ones against intruders, especially armed intruders," Morse said.

"Chief Gary Brizzee and the Los Banos Police Department, along with the Department of Justice, conducted a painstaking and thorough investigation of the circumstances leading up to the death of Bidal Taito. We recognize that a great deal of emotion and speculation has accompanied the investigation. Many of the facts associated with the shooting, including the planned burglary by Taito and his two companions, and the presence of a .22 pistol, were not released previously because of the ongoing investigation," Morse noted.