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**February 18, 2021**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Approved by JAK**  
**Press Release # 21-11**

Re: Jury Trial Conviction: Kenneth Coffia-Avery BF180331A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a jury verdict in a multiple-victim armed robbery case today.

On February 17, 2021, in a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Hunter E. Starr, a Kern County jury convicted Kenneth Coffia-Avery of multiple counts of robbery, assault with a semiautomatic firearm, criminal threats, and active participation in a criminal street gang, among other charges. His codefendant, Victor Castaneda, entered into a plea for robbery prior to the start of the jury trial.

On February 23, 2020, just past midnight, Kenneth Coffia-Avery and Victor Castaneda, both documented Westside Baker criminal street gang members, entered the Circle K near the corner of California and Oak Street. Castaneda stayed at the front of the business, keeping the attention of the clerks, while Coffia-Avery went to the back of the store. Castaneda then walked out of the Circle K, and Coffia-Avery pulled the semiautomatic firearm, pointing it at the two clerks and demanding the cash registers and safe be emptied. After obtaining the cash, Coffia-Avery threatened to shoot the clerks if they called police. Bakersfield Police used still photos from the Circle K's surveillance in an attempt to get community assistance in identifying Coffia-Avery and Castaneda. Shortly after, the two were identified and arrested.

Coffia-Avery had posted a \$200,000 bail on the case and been released early on in the trial process. During the trial, after the prosecutor presented a large portion of the evidence in the case, Coffia-Avery did not return to court for the rest of the trial. The court determined that the defendant had voluntarily chosen not to attend his own trial, and the case proceeded without the presence of the defendant, though his attorney continued to represent his interests. The jury reached and announced the verdict without the defendant being present to hear it. The defendant is currently at-large and has a warrant issued for his arrest. Anyone with knowledge of his whereabouts is encouraged to call Bakersfield Police immediately.

This conviction was made possible by members of the community who assisted law enforcement and by the tireless efforts of the Bakersfield Police Department's Special Enforcement Unit.

Sentencing is scheduled for March 17, 2021 where Coffia-Avery faces a sentence of over 38 years in prison.