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Remarks of Suffolk District Attorney Daniel F. Conley On Indictments in the Murders of Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado

BOSTON, May 15, 2014—Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel F. Conley today delivered the following remarks on the indictment of AARON HERNANDEZ (D.O.B. 11/6/89) on two counts of first-degree murder and other offenses:

“Good morning.

“A short time ago, the Suffolk County Grand Jury returned indictments charging AARON HERNANDEZ with two counts of first-degree murder for the shooting deaths of Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado. Mr. de Abreu and Mr. Furtado were ambushed and executed as they drove home along Shawmut Avenue in Boston’s South End in the early morning hours of July 16, 2012.

“The indictments also allege three counts of armed assault with intent to murder and one count of assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon. These indictments reflect shots fired at three surviving victims who were in the car with Mr. de Abreu and Mr. Furtado at the time of the homicides. Those victims are one man who was struck but not killed and two more men who escaped physical injury.

“The indictments further charge Hernandez with unlawfully possessing the .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver he allegedly used in the attack.

“Finally, the grand jury has returned an additional indictment charging TANYA SINGLETON, Hernandez’ cousin, with criminal contempt of court. Their arraignments in Suffolk Superior Court have not yet been scheduled but we expect them sometime in the near future.

“I am joined this morning by Boston Police Commissioner William Evans, Superintendent in Chief William Gross, Superintendent Robert Merner, Superintendent Kevin Buckley, Deputy Superintendent John Brown, Lt. Det. Greg Long, Lt. Paul Mahoney, and the Homicide squad of Sgt. Det. Marc Sullivan and Dets. Josh Cummings, Paul MacIsaac, and Dave Munroe. Also with us are First Assistant District Attorney Patrick Haggan, Assistant District Attorney Teresa Anderson of our Appellate Division, Victim Witness Advocate Katherine Moran, and Assistant District Attorney Edmond Zabin, chief of our Homicide Unit.

“Today’s indictments represent nearly two years of investigation by these police and prosecutors and others in Boston and beyond. They’re the result of testimony from more than two dozen witnesses and over 80 exhibits presented to the grand jury starting on July 17, 2012,

and continuing through this morning. The transcripts of the grand jury investigation amount to more than 1200 pages.

“As you know, Mr. Hernandez is currently facing charges in connection with another homicide. While we have a duty to inform the public, and in particular the victims and their families, about these charges, we also have an obligation to our counterparts in Bristol County not to make statements that could compromise their prosecution. We have a similar obligation to protect the defendant’s right to a fair trial – not just in our case but also in Bristol County, where he could be tried first. For these reasons, we must be limited in the information we release to the public outside of a court proceeding. I’ve discussed these limitations with Commissioner Evans, and he agrees – we’re both aware of the heightened public interest in this case, but we have to balance that interest with our ethical responsibilities to the Commonwealth’s cases and the defendants’ rights.

“With that caveat, I’ll offer a brief summary of the allegations. But first, I want to make something clear about the victims in this case.

“On the morning Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado were killed, they were described in media reports as being tied to a Cape Verdean gang based in Dorchester. Nothing could be further from the truth. Neither of them were involved in gangs, guns, or violent crime, and that characterization was unfair to their memory and their families. We have nothing but sympathy for them and their ordeals.

“At about 12:30 a.m. on July 16, 2012, the victims arrived at the Cure Lounge on Tremont Street in Boston’s Theater District. By coincidence, Aaron Hernandez and another known individual entered the club at the same time. Our investigation has not uncovered any evidence that these two groups were known to each other, but their chance encounter inside the club triggered a series of events that ended in the murders.

“After the victims left the club at about 2:00 a.m., they drove down Tremont Street. Unbeknownst to them, Hernandez followed behind, traveling in an SUV. When the victims’ car stopped at a red light on Shawmut Avenue waiting to turn onto Herald Street, the SUV pulled up beside the victims’ car on the right. Aaron Hernandez fired a .38 caliber revolver multiple times from the driver’s side of his vehicle into the passenger’s side of the victims’ vehicle. Daniel de Abreu, the driver, suffered multiple wounds, including a fatal gunshot wound to the chest. Safiro Furtado, in the front passenger seat, also suffered multiple wounds, including a fatal gunshot wound to the head. Two backseat passengers escaped physical injury and fled on foot. A third remained with his friends, suffering a gunshot wound to his arm.

“From last June forward, there were a number of significant developments in the investigation. Those developments include the recovery of the car Hernandez used in the murders and hid in a relative’s garage in Bristol, Connecticut, and the recovery of the murder weapon from an individual with connections to Hernandez.

“I expect more information will be forthcoming at arraignment, but at this stage of the case – the return of indictments – there are limitations to the information that we can provide.

“As to the indictment returned against Hernandez’ cousin, Tanya Singleton, she was subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury investigating the July 2012 murders. She was granted an order of immunity to provide to certain information regarding the SUV used in those murders without exposing herself to prosecution, but on Sept. 13, 2013, she refused to testify.

“The depth and breadth of our investigation speaks to the professionalism of our trial team – First Assistant DA Patrick Haggan, who led the investigation for our office, and Appellate ADA Teresa Anderson, who assisted him.

“I would also like to commend Sgt. Det. Sullivan and his squad. They proved their commitment to this case long before it attracted national attention. The outstanding work they did collecting, preserving, and analyzing the evidence in those critical first few days contributed directly to the extensive progress we’ve made in the grand jury over the past year.

“I would also like to thank the Massachusetts State Police, the North Attleboro Police, the Bristol and Hampden County District Attorneys’ offices, the Bristol County State Police Detective Unit, police and prosecutors in Hartford and Bristol, Connecticut and the United States Marshal Service for their continued assistance.

“For us, this case was never about Aaron Hernandez. This case was about two victims who were stalked, ambushed, and senselessly murdered on the streets of the city they called home. I assigned this case to First Assistant DA Patrick Haggan on the very morning of their murders – not because we knew where the evidence would take us, but because it was a double homicide with few leads and well-suited to his strengths as a prosecutor.

“ADA Teresa Anderson responded to the corner of Shawmut Ave and Herald Street alongside Sgt. Det. Sullivan’s squad that early morning and has been involved with the case since that time – again, not because of who the defendant turned out to be, but because the victims and their families deserved our very best efforts from day one. No matter who the victim or defendant might be, every murder in Boston gets the best investigators and the most experienced prosecutors.

“Again, I know you have many questions – probably very detailed and fact-specific questions that we simply can’t ethically answer at this stage in the process. In a week or so, when the man who pulled the trigger at the corner of Shawmut Ave and Herald Street is arraigned, I expect you’ll hear much more about the facts and circumstances of this case, but for the moment I have to ask for your patience as we proceed as carefully and methodically as we have since that terrible morning in July of 2012.

“I’ll now ask Commissioner Evans to say a few words on behalf of the Boston Police Department.”

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All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

CUTLINES:

5.15.14-1: Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel F. Conley announces first-degree murder indictments against Aaron Hernandez in the July 16, 2012, shooting deaths of Daniel de Abreu, 29, and Safiro Furtado, 28, in Boston’s South End. With him are Assistant District Attorney Teresa Anderson of the DA’s Appellate Division (left), who responded to the scene of the murders shortly after the incident, Boston Police Commissioner William Evans (center right), and Sgt. Det. Marc Sullivan, who led the Boston Police Homicide Squad investigating the homicides.

5.15.14-2: Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel F. Conley announces first-degree murder indictments against Aaron Hernandez in the July 16, 2012, shooting deaths of Daniel de Abreu, 29, and Safiro Furtado, 28, in Boston’s South End. With Conley are (from left to right) Assistant District Attorney Edmond Zabin, chief of the DA’s Homicide Unit; Assistant District Attorney Teresa Anderson, assigned to the trial team prosecuting Hernandez; First Assistant District Attorney Patrick Haggan, who led the grand jury investigation that culminated in today’s indictments; Boston Police Commissioner William Evans; Sgt. Det. Marc Sullivan, who led the BPD Homicide squad in the case; Lt. Greg Long; Det. Josh Cummings; Det. Dave Munroe; Det. Paul MacIsaac; and Superintendent Kevin Buckley.