FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SHOOTER, ACCOMPLICE ARRESTED FOR THE MURDER OF RACHEL KING IN CHELTEMHAM

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (April 26, 2023) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Cheltenham Township Police Chief John Slavin announced today the charging of Zakkee Steven Alhakim, 33, of Philadelphia, and Julie Jean, 34, of Elkins Park, with First-Degree Murder, Conspiracy and other charges related to the killing of 35-year-old Rachel King in the Dunkin’ Donuts drive-thru lane in Cheltenham.

“This cold-blooded killing of Rachel King was a targeted murder of an innocent person, planned by these two defendants and horrifically carried out in front of King’s son,” said Steele. “It is a tragic killing of a good person, all because of an ended affair.”

The murder occurred at approximately 7:30 a.m., April 11, 2023. Cheltenham Township Police were dispatched to the Melrose Shopping Center for the report of a shooting. On arrival, police found King dead in the driver’s seat of her Ford Edge vehicle, which had come to a rest on a parking island near the Dunkin’ Donuts drive-thru lane. In processing the murder scene, detectives recovered six 9mm fired cartridge casings (FCCs) from outside of the Ford Edge where the shooter had been standing when he killed King.
Cheltenham Township Police and Montgomery County Detectives launched a joint homicide investigation. Through multiple interviews and surveillance videos, detectives determined that the victim’s Ford Edge was followed from her residence in the Lynnewood Gardens apartments by a silver Mercury Sable driven by Alhakim. Cellphone evidence and surveillance video showed that Alhakim had previously been outside of King’s residence in the days leading up to the murder and had watched her movements. On the morning of the murder, the investigation found that when King pulled her vehicle into a line of traffic in the Dunkin’ Donuts drive-thru lane, defendant Alhakim parked the Mercury Sable a short distance away, then walked to the driver’s side window of King’s vehicle and shot her multiple times, killing her. Alhakim returned to his vehicle and fled the scene. The day after the murder, detectives located additional surveillance video on the route from King’s residence to the Dunkin’ Donuts, which clearly showed the Mercury Sable’s license plate was PA #DYR-9012.

The joint investigation found that Alhakim and Jean planned and conspired to murder King, who was the longtime girlfriend of William Hayes. Jean and Hayes had had an affair last year, and after Hayes broke it off, Jean continued to text, call and harass both King and Hayes, prompting Hayes to obtain a Protection From Abuse Order against Jean. The connection between the two defendants, detectives learned, was through the father of Jean’s three children, who was Alhakim’s cousin. Cellphone evidence found that Jean added Alhakim’s phone number under “Zah” to her contacts in mid-February, and they communicated and met multiple times leading up to the murder. Very soon after Jean saved Alhakim’s contact info, Alhakim saved a screen capture to his phone of a Google map of the victim’s apartment complex, with a pin marking King’s exact residence and a red arrow showing a route to travel directly to the victim’s residence.

Also of note on Alhakim’s phone were two photographs. One was the victim’s photo displayed on a cellphone held by a female, believed to be Jean. The photo was taken on Feb. 25, 2023, at 2:17 p.m., less than 30 minutes after Alhakim shared his real-time location with Jean for them to meet up. A comparison by an expert in video forensics of the cellphone depicted in the photo and Jean’s actual cellphone found that they were the same phone due to the type of cellphone case and a crack in the corner of the screen. Four minutes after that photo was taken, at 2:21 p.m., a screen capture of a photo montage of Rachel King was saved on Alhakim’s phone.

Through an examination of the call detail records and cellular phone downloads of the two defendants, detectives found that contact between the two had been deleted from their cellular phones, with Jean deleting 787 texts just 13 minutes prior to her interview with detectives on April 12. Many of those communications were able to be recovered by law enforcement, including the last message that Jean sent to Alhakim, which was sent through CashApp at 12:11 p.m. on the day of the murder, April 11, 2023. It was a payment of $5, with the emoji message that is interpreted to mean “link up, message me, no phones, that’s it.”

The investigation found that Alhakim and Jean were connected through the Mercury Sable driven by Alhakim. Alhakim obtained the vehicle on March 30, 2023, less than two weeks before the murder, when Alhakim and Jean went together to buy it at a
shop on 61st Street in Philadelphia. The vehicle was purchased in Julie Jean’s name.

Later on the day of the murder, Philadelphia Police on patrol spotted the silver Mercury Sable wanted in this murder as well as for an April 7, 2023, murder in Philadelphia at 5100 N. Broad Street, which captured the Mercury on surveillance video. When officers attempted to stop the Mercury Sable, the vehicle fled at a high rate of speed until it crashed into a fence on 16th Street. Alhakim was taken into custody and charged with the Philadelphia homicide. At the Philadelphia murder scene, eleven 9mm fired cartridge casings (FCCs) were recovered.

The FCCs from the Philadelphia and Cheltenham murders were entered into Montgomery County’s new NIBIN (National Integrated Ballistic Information Network) machine, and on April 13, 2023, the NIBIN system determined that there was a match between the FCCs from the Philadelphia and the Cheltenham murders. The NIBIN match was confirmed through physical examination of the FCCs by a firearms and ballistics expert with the Montgomery County Detective Bureau. Further, the investigation found evidence that the FCCs would be consistent with having come from a privately made firearm—commonly called a “ghost gun.” A photo of the firearm, taken on March 16, 2023, was found in Alhakim’s cellphone.

Jean was arrested on charges of First-Degree Murder, Third-Degree Murder and Conspiracy. She was arraigned on April 25, 2023, before Magisterial District Judge Juanita A. Price. Bail was denied as there is no bail for First-Degree Murder, and Jean was remanded to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 11 a.m. May 5, 2023, before Magisterial District Judge Christopher J. Cerski.

Alhakim has been charged with First-Degree Murder, Third-Degree Murder, Conspiracy and Possessing an Instrument of Crime and is awaiting arraignment on the Montgomery County charges. He is currently in custody at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia.

The case will be prosecuted by District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Assistant District Attorney Caroline Goldstein, Captain of the Family Protection Unit.

Approved for release:
Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.