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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: January 23, 2009
Re: Luis Penalozza-
Defendant admits guilt in shooting of
Martin Leon

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced that Luis Penalozza, 38, of Oakdale was convicted in the April 29, 2004 shooting death of Martin Leon of Riverbank. Penalozza pled no contest to manslaughter, possession of methamphetamine for sale, possession of cocaine for sale, evading police, and admitted a prior conviction for residential burglary.

Martin Leon was shot three times outside his house as he was leaving for work. At least one of the three shots was instantly fatal. Penalozza was alleged to have acted as a middleman between the victim's wife, Maria Leon, and other people who either arranged the shooting of, or shot, Martin Leon. When arrested in 2005, Penalozza had methamphetamine and cocaine in his car.

Maria Leon, Jose Gaona, and Eved Romero have previously pled guilty to charges relating to the killing. The actual shooter is still at large.

The Honorable Timothy Salter, who was presiding over the trial, scheduled Penalozza's sentencing for February 27, 2009, the same date as Maria Leon's sentencing, in Department 1 of the Stanislaus Superior Court.

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