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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Re: Hernandez Sentenced 50 years-to-life

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Saul Hernandez, age 36, of Ceres, was finally sentenced after a jury found him guilty of 1st degree murder in March 2014. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

During the afternoon of Monday, August 22, 2011 on Crows Landing Road, the defendant's brother was robbed of his cell phone and wallet by Norteno gang members putting on a car wash fundraiser for funeral expenses of a murdered Norteno gang member. Neither Saul Hernandez nor his brother were in a gang. Hernandez then drove to get his 40 mm glock handgun and started to return to the scene. The defendant claims he wanted to get a surveillance video from a nearby taco truck. (At the time of the murder, Hernandez was 6' 1", 180 lbs, 33 years old and his brother was 5' 8", 160 lbs, and 35 years old).

While driving back to the scene at rush hour on Crows Landing Road at approximately 5:20 PM, the defendant saw a 5' 6", 135 lbs, 16-year-old Norteno wearing a red hat and walking alone. The defendant and his brother believed that this boy was involved in the earlier robbery. Hernandez stopped his car to let his brother confront the boy. A fist fight immediately broke out and the defendant's brother was knocked to the ground. Hernandez then fired 6 shots at the victim which resulted in a graze to his shoulder, a shot to his arm, two shots to the back, one shot to the victim's head, and another to his face. Hernandez then drove by the car wash and fired his gun twice into the air. Witnesses got a partial license plate number for the defendant's car.

Hernandez drove back to his house a few miles away where he changed his clothes, made plans to hide his car, discarded the firearm, and left in another vehicle. When the defendant was informed that some of his relatives were stopped by the police while trying to dump his car, other family members pressured him to surrender himself so that the other relatives didn't get charged with the murder.

"The defendant wanted revenge," said prosecutor Jeff Mangar, "so he got his handgun and executed this 16-year-old boy in front of open businesses during rush hour on Crows Landing Road."

Evidence was presented that at the time of this murder the defendant had been on probation for giving a false name to a police officer and vandalism. That conviction was based on the fact that the defendant kicked the door of a van that belonged to a grocery store manager after the manager had called the police on the defendant for selling fake identifications.

The jury also heard that the defendant had previously been granted immunity to testify against his uncle in a separate 2004 murder trial.

During the sentencing hearing, the victim's mother stated that "she does not understand how an adult could do that to a child."

Judge McFadden followed prosecutor Jeff Mangar's recommendation and sentenced Saul Hernandez to the maximum of fifty years-to-life in state prison.