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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: June 16, 2017
Re: Manuel Cosio Lopez
Parole Denied

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Manuel Cosio Lopez, age 50, of Modesto, was found unsuitable for parole at a June 13, 2017 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on the callousness of the murder, Lopez's disciplinary problems while in prison and the unreasonable risk to public safety should he be paroled. The commissioners agreed, finding that Lopez continues to pose an unreasonable risk of danger to society and denied parole for three years.

On Saturday, December 11, 1993 at approximately 7:30 p.m., Lopez drove to a convenience store near West Orangeburg Avenue in Modesto. He was approached by Jesse Robles, a 20-year-old student, who asked him to purchase alcohol since he was underage. Lopez, who was then 28 years old, agreed. Upon exiting the store, an argument ensued between them and Lopez then drove off with the beer. After travelling a short distance, Lopez made a u-turn and drove back. He then fired one round from a pistol which struck Robles in the abdomen. Robles died at the scene.

Lopez fled the area and the investigation began. Video surveillance from the store, along with witness statements and the unusual coincidence that Robles' mother knew Lopez for several years, allowed detectives to identify Lopez. One week later, Lopez was arrested in Turlock after crashing a stolen pick-up truck. He was in possession of another handgun. Lopez had been out on bail for a separate possession of methamphetamine case when he committed these offenses. While awaiting his jury trials, Lopez was caught with a weapon while in the county jail.

After being convicted at a jury trial of second degree murder, vehicle theft, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of a weapon in 1994, Lopez was sentenced to 23 years-to-life in state prison.

During the hearing, Prosecutor Jeff Mangar opposed release, noting that while Lopez has been in prison custody, he has continued his criminality. Lopez rose to the level of a squad leader of the Northern Structure Prison Gang and received rules violations for assaults on other inmates which caused serious bodily injury, manufacturing alcohol, and disobeying the prison guards. Lopez told

the board that since he became eligible for parole in 2011, he has “dropped out” of the gang, attended anger management classes, and found God. However, the board determined that Lopez still posed an unreasonable risk to public safety and denied parole for an additional three years.

Lopez had previously been denied parole three times with the most recent denial last year. He will be scheduled for another hearing in 2020, although that hearing may be advanced to as early as next year based on recent changes in the law.

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