



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: February 5, 2021
Re: Peter Angelo Cortez
Serial Child Molester Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Peter Cortez, age 81, formerly of Modesto, was denied parole during a January 13, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the California Institution for Men in Chino, California. Deputy District Attorney Merrill Hoult appeared on behalf of the People.

In November of 1999, an 8-year-old girl reported that her step-grandfather, Cortez, had molested her on several occasions. A Modesto Police Department investigation revealed that Cortez had also sexually assaulted the child's 9-year-old brother. Two additional female victims came forward and reported that Cortez had molested them 20 years earlier when they were young children. On October 24, 2000, Cortez was convicted by a Stanislaus County jury of 5 counts of lewd acts with children under the age of 14 with an enhancement for molesting multiple victims. On November 21, 2000, he was sentenced by Judge Glenn Ritchey, Jr. to serve 27 years-to-life in prison.

During the parole hearing, Cortez denied some of the allegations and minimized the severity of his criminal conduct. He could not explain to the Board what led him to sexually assault children and claimed it was merely "curiosity."

Deputy District Attorney Hoult asked the Board to deny parole arguing that Cortez currently poses a high risk of danger to society if he were released. Hoult argued that Cortez lacked insight into what caused him to commit his crimes and that he failed to take part in classes that would help prevent him from victimizing children in the future. The Board agreed and denied parole for five years, finding that Cortez needed to understand the causative factors that led him to commit the crime, that his denials and attempts to minimize his culpability were not credible and that he lacked remorse and empathy for his victims.

This was Cortez's first parole hearing. He was previously eligible for a parole hearing in 2017 but agreed to postpone that hearing for three years. He will be eligible for his next parole hearing in 2026.

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