



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
David P. Harris

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Jeffrey M. Laugero
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 10, 2021
Re: Martin Zadek Alejo
“Three Strikes” Life Inmate Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

John Goold, Public Information Liaison
Phone: (209) 525-5550

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Martin Zadek Alejo, age 55, of Modesto, California, was found unsuitable for parole during a February 23, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, California. Deputy District Attorney Kirk Brennan appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

In 1984, Alejo was convicted of forcible rape of a 15-year-old victim, a “strike” under California’s “Three Strikes” law. He was sentenced to serve eight years in the California Youth Authority (CYA) for the crime. In 1988, he was paroled and violated the terms of his parole by driving under the influence of alcohol (1989 and 1990) and leaving the scene of an accident and driving on a suspended license (1990). His parole was revoked and, having been disqualified from further CYA supervision, he was sent to state prison for nine months.

After being paroled in 1991, Alejo committed a new felony by discharging a firearm from a vehicle. He was convicted of his second “strike” offense and sentenced to serve five years in state prison for the crime and for violating parole.

Released in 1994, Alejo continued to use drugs and alcohol and failed to register as a sex offender. He was returned to, and released from, state prison several times for parole violations before parole ultimately expired on January 21, 1998.

Almost immediately after that release, Alejo was contacted by a Modesto Police officer on February 7, 1998 and arrested for possession of methamphetamine. A Stanislaus County jury convicted him of the felony drug possession offense and Alejo’s two prior “strike” convictions were found true during a court trial before Judge John Whiteside. Although the law has been changed to make drug possession a misdemeanor, it remains a felony for criminals previously convicted of certain sex offenses.

A defense motion to dismiss one of Alejo’s prior “strike” convictions was later denied by Judge Whiteside who sentenced Alejo to serve a total of 27 years to life in state prison.

Office: 832 12th Street, Suite 300 Modesto, CA 95354 Mailing: PO BOX 442 Modesto, CA 95353
Telephone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 558-4027 www.stanislaus-da.org



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Since being in custody, Alejo has violated prison rules by destroying state property (2008), failing to report (2001) and not following grooming standards (2005).

A prison psychologist interviewed Alejo on November 19, 2020 and gave the opinion that Alejo represented a low risk for future violence if he were to be released on parole, despite one analysis placing him at above average risk for future potential sexual offenses.

During the parole hearing on February 23, 2021, Deputy District Attorney Brennan asked the Board to deny Alejo's release based on various unsuitability factors, including that the inmate lacked insight into what led to him to a lifetime of crime, had not participated in any sex offender treatment classes, had insufficient victim impact programming and completed minimal substance abuse programming.

After deliberations, the Board found that Alejo posed an unreasonable risk to public safety and denied release on parole for three years. The Board found that Alejo's lack of sex offender and victim impact programming, minimal substance abuse programming, minimization of his prior violent offenses during his testimony at the hearing and lack of adequate understanding of how his crimes impacted his victims demonstrated unsuitability for parole.

Alejo has been in prison for 23 years. This was his first parole hearing. Although the denial was for three years, under current law he may petition the Board for an earlier hearing if he can show the Board a change in circumstances.

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