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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: 1/13/06

Re: GANG MEMBER CONVICTED

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County Assistant District Attorney Carol Shipley announced today that ENRIQUE GOMEZ, aka “SOLDIER,” age 31, of Turlock, was convicted yesterday by a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury of strong arm robbery and participating in a criminal street gang. The jury also found true an enhancement that the robbery was committed for the benefit of the “Norteno” criminal street gang. Deputy District Attorney Thomas Brennan prosecuted the case on behalf of the People.

During the three day jury trial, testimony revealed that on November 17th, 2004 at approximately 6:00 a.m., the 22-year-old victim was walking through Columbia Park in Turlock on his way to work. Gomez confronted the victim and asked, “Who do you claim?” When the victim denied any gang involvement, Gomez punched the victim in the face opening up a wound under the victim’s eye. After the victim was knocked to the ground, Gomez stood over the victim and threatened to stab him. Gomez then removed a wallet and cell phone from the victim’s pockets.

As the victim ran away from the crime scene, Gomez yelled, “You better run you (expletive) little (expletive)... Norte!”

Two gang experts from Turlock Police Department and the Stanislaus County Gang Task Force testified regarding Gomez’s extensive gang history and how members of the “Norteno” criminal street gang have “taken over” Columbia Park. Testimony was presented to the jury that Gomez and other Nortenos do not have typical 9-to-5 jobs. They spend their time committing gang-related crimes including dealing drugs,

committing robberies, drive-by shootings, and auto thefts. The experts also testified that Gomez held the rank of "Tier Security" over the other Norteno gang members housed in the county jail. Gomez's rank within the criminal street gang is the equivalent of a Lieutenant in the military.

During closing argument, Deputy District Attorney Brennan urged the jury to send "Soldier" and the other Columbia Park Nortenos a message: The community will not tolerate their atrocious gang activities. Within ninety minutes of receiving the case for deliberation, the jury responded by returning guilty verdicts on all counts and enhancements.

Gomez faces a maximum of 16 years in state prison. His sentencing date is set for February 2, 2006. Gomez must serve 85% of any prison sentence because he was convicted of a violent felony under California's sentencing law.

The District Attorney's Office reaffirms its policy of prosecuting hard core gang members to the full extent of the law, offering no plea bargains when sufficient evidence is present to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

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