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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Re: Preliminary hearing in Martin Leon murder

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Maria Leon, 44, of Riverbank; Jose Gaona, 28, of Riverbank; Luis Penalzoza, 36, of Oakdale; and Eved Romero, 20, of Olivehurst, California have been held to answer on murder and conspiracy to commit murder charges after a two-day preliminary hearing before Stanislaus County Superior Court Judge Timothy W. Salter. Deputy District Attorney John R. Mayne appeared on behalf of the People.

The charges alleged in the criminal complaint stem from the April 29, 2004 shooting death of Martin Leon at his home in Riverbank. The defendants will be arraigned and a jury trial date set on February 6th, 2007. The maximum possible penalty for each defendant is life in prison without the possibility of parole.

“Held to answer,” means that the judge found reasonable cause to believe the defendants committed the crimes charged in the complaint and should be further held for a jury trial. These charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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