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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 24, 2020
Re: Lawrence Mejia
Parole denial

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Lawrence Mejia, age 35, of San Jose, was denied parole during a November 18, 2020, hearing before the Board of Parole Hearings conducted at High Desert State Prison in Susanville, California. Deputy District Attorney Laura Keenan attended the hearing on behalf of the People.

On May 22, 2005, at approximately 11:40 p.m. in the evening, Mejia and another subject went into an AM/PM market in Riverbank. Mejia pointed a gun the cashier saying "Give me all your money, I'm not playing around." He also demanded cigarettes while the second subject went to the refrigerator and took three 12-packs of Corona beer. As they fled, they encountered a customer in the parking lot who saw the beer and wanted to know where the party was. Mejia pointed his gun at the customer and said, "Don't follow me motherfucker." Both subjects got into a pickup truck and fled the scene with \$250.00 in cash, beer and cigarettes.

Less than an hour later, at 12:35 a.m. on May 23rd, Mejia and his partner went to a liquor store on Yosemite Avenue in Modesto. When the clerk refused to sell them cigarettes, they went outside and returned with a handgun, demanding "Put it in the bag. All you guys, everything." After receiving \$162.00 in cash, they fled.

Two days later, on May 25, 2005, at approximately 3:00 a.m., both subjects committed a third robbery at a store on North Carpenter road in Modesto. They entered wearing masks and Mejia pointed a pistol directly at the owner and an employee demanding money and everything in the victims pockets. They ran away after receiving \$242.00.

Minutes later at 3:25 a.m., Mejia and his partner robbed another convenience store on Standiford Avenue in Modesto. Mejia went behind the counter and pointed a gun at the employee while demanding money while the other suspect took cigarettes. They escaped with \$130.00 in cash and four cartons of cigarettes.

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After the fourth robbery, a Modesto Police officer located the suspects' pickup truck on a side street near the location of the crime. Suspects Lawrence Mejia and Willie Torres ran from the vehicle and were subsequently arrested. A search of the truck and the area around where Mejia was located revealed cigarettes, cell phones, a red bandanna, a hockey mask and a loaded pistol.

A search of the cellphones revealed numerous gang related photographs. Both suspects had gang tattoos. Both admitted being members of the "Barrio Eastside" Norteno criminal street gang in San Jose.

Mejia admitted being involved in all four robberies.

On June 7, 2006, Mejia was convicted by a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury of all four robberies along with various firearm and gang enhancements. He was sentenced to serve a total of 42 years and 8 months in state prison.

In 2011, Mejia was convicted of two counts of possessing a sharp instrument and given an additional 6 years in prison. In 2019, he was convicted of possession of controlled substances by an inmate and given another 3 years.

Mejia has also committed numerous serious rule violations while in prison including assault on another with a weapon, battery on a peace officer, possession of a cellphone, disobeying orders and using using illegal drugs and inmate manufactured alcohol.

A prison psychologist examined Mejia and gave the opinion that Mejia posed a high risk for future violence if he were to be paroled into the community. Mejia's high risk rating was driven by multiple recent rule violations, relatively recent alcohol use, antisocial thinking, limited coping strategies and negative peer associations.

During the hearing, Deputy District Attorney Keenan argued against Mejia's release based on his continuing history of criminal convictions and serious rule violations while incarcerated, as well as his gang membership.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board found that Mejia posed an unreasonable risk of danger to society if he were to be released and denied parole for a period of seven years.

This was Mejia's first parole hearing.

Co-defendant Willie Wildmer Torres, Jr. was also convicted of one of the robberies and served a 14-year prison sentence. Torres and two other defendants are currently charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and murder along with gang enhancements in Stanislaus County Superior Court. That case is on calendar December 9, 2020, in Department 6 of the Superior Court at 8:30 a.m. for setting a jury trial.

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