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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: May 5, 2022
Re: Juanmingo Becerra
Gang Killer Denied Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Juanmingo Becerra, age 34, of Modesto was denied parole during an April 5, 2022 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Pleasant Valley Creek State Prison in Coalinga. Deputy District Attorney Victoria Vasquez appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On November 9, 2007, Becerra was an active member of the Eastside Modesto Norteno criminal street gang. Becerra approached 31-year-old Jaime Torres on the street and shot him in the back several times with a .38 caliber handgun. As a male subject who was with Torres ran away, Becerra pointed his gun at him, but it did not fire. Torres was rushed to the hospital and pronounced dead by medical staff. Investigators determined that Torres had dropped out of Becerra's gang and had not been following orders from gang leaders.

Becerra was arrested and originally charged with premeditated murder, attempted murder and intimidation of witnesses as well as enhancements for personally using a gun causing great bodily injury and that he did these crimes for the benefit of a criminal street gang. On August 23, 2013, Becerra pled guilty to a lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter and assault with a firearm. He also admitted using a gun causing great bodily injury and that he did it for the benefit his criminal street gang. Becerra was then sentenced by Judge Ricardo Cordova to serve a term of 27 years in prison.

While in custody in the Stanislaus County Jail prior to his plea, Becerra assaulted staff and other inmates multiple times. He was twice found in possession of inmate-made weapons. After being transferred to prison, Becerra possessed a cell phone that he tried to destroy when caught with it by throwing it into the toilet in his cell. He violated other prison rules by drinking inmate-made alcohol and would not obey staff orders.

At the parole hearing, Becerra told the Board that he also committed several additional offenses while in prison but was never caught. Becerra also told the Board that he killed Torres because he was acting on the belief system of his gang at that time.

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A prison psychologist who interviewed Becerra found that he had only recently began to conform to prison rules but had not dropped out of the gang, raising the concern he could relapse back into his prior criminal behavior. The psychologist gave the opinion that Becerra would pose a moderate risk for future violence to the community if he were to be released from custody.

Following deliberations, the Board denied parole for a period of three years. In doing so, they found that Becerra's prior criminal history, beginning as a juvenile, along with multiple prior convictions and callous attitude toward others outweighed the youthful offender factors the Board was required to consider. The Board also stressed that Becerra's failure to debrief and renounce his criminal gang ties reflected that he was straddling the fence which was concerning to the Board given that gang membership was critical to his role in killing the victim.

This is Becerra's first parole hearing. He will be scheduled for another hearing in 2025, although he may petition the Board for an earlier date if there is a change in circumstances as defined under current law. The Board also noted that they will review his case in one year and indicated there is a strong chance they will advance his hearing in 18 months.

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