



# Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

**Jeff Laugero**  
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney  
Mark Zahner

Chief Deputies  
Marlisa Ferreira  
Wendell Emerson  
Michael D. Houston

Bureau of Investigation  
Chief Terry L. Seese

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## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

Date: April 14, 2023  
Re: Juan Manuel Guzman  
Convicted Killer Parole Denied

### For More Information Contact:

John Goold, Public Information Liaison  
Phone: (209) 525-6909

**Modesto, California** - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Juan Manuel Guzman, age 51, of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during a February 28, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California. Deputy District Attorney Margot Roen appeared at the hearing and argued against parole on behalf of the People.

On September 12, 1997, two minors, Jorge V. and Jaime F., both associated with members of the Sureno criminal street gang, were walking in the Airport District in Modesto when a Cadillac pulled up and its occupants began shouting gang statements and flashing gang signs. Jorge V. pulled out a gun and fired two shots at the car as the Cadillac sped away.

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Julian Potra was approached by Guzman who told him that he had seen Jorge V. and Jaime F. earlier and needed a ride to find them. Potra drove Guzman, who had a .22-caliber revolver, to the Airport District where they located Jorge V. and Jaime F. walking on the sidewalk along with Jamie's younger brother Andres. Guzman extended his arms out the car window and fired six shots at the group, striking Jorge V. in the back. As Jorge V. fell to the ground, he saw Jaime F. grab his brother Andres and throw him to the ground. The Cadillac then accelerated rapidly and sped off. Jaime F. had taken a bullet to his neck that severed his spinal cord. He died several days later in the hospital. Andres was not injured. Jorge V., who received a gunshot wound to his back, survived his injuries. At trial, he unequivocally identified Guzman as the shooter.

On September 18, 1998, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Guzman of first degree murder and two counts of attempted premeditated murder. The jury also found true that Guzman personally used a firearm and inflicted great bodily injury.

On October 16, 1998, Superior Court Judge Al Girolami sentenced Guzman to serve 25 years to life for first degree murder plus 10 years for the firearm enhancement. In addition, he sentenced Guzman to two consecutive life terms with the possibility of parole on the attempted premeditated

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](http://www.stanislaus-da.org)



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murder counts, plus 16 months consecutive for each of the two bodily injury enhancements. An appellate court upheld Guzman's convictions and sentencing in 2000.

At the parole hearing on February 28<sup>th</sup>, Prosecutor Roen argued against releasing Guzman on parole, citing the brutal nature of the killing of a 16-year-old boy. She also highlighted his numerous serious rules violations while incarcerated including battery, possession of a deadly weapon as well as his continuing gang activity demonstrated by an incident where Guzman helped conceal the bloody clothing of another inmate who had been brutally stabbed. When the Board questioned Guzman about his gang involvement, they were less than satisfied with his answers.

After deliberations, the Board denied parole for five years, citing Guzman's lengthy history of violence both in and out of prison, his serious rules violations while incarcerated and his inability to maintain sobriety and stop engaging in violence. The Board also felt that Guzman clearly lacked self-awareness and insight as to why he committed the murder and the criminal decision making that led up to it. Finally, the Board noted that Guzman's sporadic participation in rehabilitation programs and his lack of well-defined post release plans were also factors that weighed against his release on parole.

This was Guzman's first parole hearing. His next hearing will be scheduled in five years although he may request that date be advanced if he can show a change in circumstances to the Board.

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