



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 4, 2023
Re: Julio Cesar Romero Zaragoza
Murder conviction and sentencing

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Julio Cesar Romero Zaragoza, age 52, of Turlock was convicted on February 16, 2023 of first degree murder for the killing of Enrique Becerra of Newman. Deputy District Attorney Michael Scheid prosecuted the case on behalf of the People.

On September 17, 2020, Zaragoza went to victim Enrique Becerra's home, in Newman, to kill him. Zaragoza believed that Becerra, a co-worker, had been having an affair with his wife. As Becerra came out of his house to go to work, Zaragoza shot at him several times, striking him once in the head. Zaragoza then repeatedly struck him on the head with the butt of the handgun. When he lost his grip on the revolver, Zaragoza picked up a metal pole and continued beating Becerra in the head until the victim stopped moving. A subsequent autopsy determined the cause of death to be from a gunshot wound and blunt force trauma to the head.

On September 19th, Zaragoza called the Merced County Sheriff's Department telling them he was responsible for the Newman murder and wanted to turn himself in. During an interview at the Stanislaus Sheriff's Department, Zaragoza admitted the killing and believing the victim was having an affair with his wife.

Zaragoza was charged with premeditated murder and having previously been convicted of criminal threats under California's "Three Strikes" law which could be used to double his sentence upon conviction. After a preliminary hearing in October of 2022 held Zaragoza to answer for the crime, prosecutors filed an Information adding enhancements for discharging a gun causing great bodily and the special circumstance of lying in wait, increasing the potential sentence upon conviction to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

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During the February 16, 2023, hearing before Judge Carrie Stephens, Zaragoza pled to the first degree murder charge, admitted the enhancement for premeditation and deliberation as well as an enhancement for using a firearm causing great bodily injury and having a previous “Strike” conviction for criminal threats. In return, prosecutors dismissed the special circumstance of lying in wait.

Upon accepting his plea, Judge Stephens found Zaragoza guilty and sentenced him to serve a total term of 75 years-to-life in state prison.

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