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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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Re: **Mario Torres**

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MODESTO, CALIFORNIA – Stanislaus County District Attorney James Brazelton announced today that Mario Torres, age 41, has been convicted of First Degree Murder for the July 2001 stabbing death of then 21 year-old Shelly Rodriguez. He was also found to have used a knife during the murder, and of misdemeanor child endangerment.

Torres and Rodrigues had one child and lived together in a physically abusive relationship. In May of 2001 Torres was convicted of misdemeanor assault during an incident where he threw hot soup at Rodriguez and cut the telephone line in an attempt to stop her from calling police. He received a 30 day sentence in that case and had been scheduled to turn himself in to serve his sentence on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

Only July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the day after he was supposed to turn himself in to the jail for the prior misdemeanor offense, Torres stabbed Rodriguez to death. As she lay dying, Rodrigues told paramedics that Torres had said to her "I'm going to kill you." When questioned by police at the time of the murder, Torres told them he was not the perpetrator. During the jury trial however, Torres, testifying in his own defense,

admitted killing his girlfriend, but claimed it was unintentional. Torres said that while he was high on methamphetamine, he had simply tried to scare Rodriguez by poking her with a knife. Torres told jurors he was only acting on impulse, in an attempt to negate the intent requirement for murder.

Stanislaus County jurors heard the case during a 7 day jury trial. After deliberating several hours on Tuesday afternoon, the jury returned verdicts of First Degree Murder. Deputy District Attorney Javonne Phillips prosecuted the case for the People.

Mario Torres is scheduled to be sentenced on August 2, 2002 in Superior Court Department 2 before Judge David Vanderwall. Torres faces a maximum of 56 years to life in state prison.