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**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

Date: October 22, 2008  
Re: Guilty Plea from Maria Leon  
and Jose Gaona #1088426

**For More Information Contact:**

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Maria Leon, age 43 of Riverbank, entered a plea of no contest to Voluntary Manslaughter and Soliciting Murder. Jose Gaona, age 30, also of Riverbank, entered a plea of no contest to Voluntary Manslaughter, Soliciting Murder, Possession of Cocaine for Sale, Possession of Methamphetamine for Sale and Evading a Peace Officer. Deputy District Attorney John R. Mayne prosecuted the case for the People.

The case arose out of events which occurred on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004 when Martin Leon was shot in front of his Riverbank home. His wife, Maria Leon, was charged with hiring people to arrange his murder. In evidence shown at the preliminary hearing, Jose Gaona was Ms. Leon's boyfriend and assisted in the planning of the murder. Ms. Leon unsuccessfully attempted to call off the murder; she later admitted her involvement to investigators and assisted them in identifying the perpetrators.

Leon is facing 18 years in state prison and Gaona is facing 16 years and 4 months in state prison. A hearing on further proceedings is scheduled for Leon on November 5<sup>th</sup> and sentencing is scheduled for Gaona on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Both hearings will be held in Department 1 before the Honorable Timothy Salter. Eved Romero previously pled guilty to murder and was sentenced to 25 years to life for his role in the murder.

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