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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: June 30, 2008
Re: GANG MEMBER sentenced to Life in
Prison

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Daniel Joseph Martinez, age 23, of Modesto, was sentenced to 40 years to life this morning by the Honorable Donald N. Shaver after a Stanislaus County jury found Martinez guilty of murdering Jefe Garcia, age 16, on December 8th, 2005. The jury also convicted Martinez of a firearm enhancement and a gang enhancement that will send Martinez to a maximum security prison equipped to house hard core gang members for the remainder of his life. Deputy District Attorney Thomas Brennan prosecuted the case for the People.

On December 8th, 2005, Daniel Joseph Martinez and co-defendant Pablo Lopez walked down Alamo Street in Modesto at the same time Jefe Garcia and his 17 year old brother Jair Garcia were crossing out "YGL 14" graffiti that had been spray painted on the sidewalk in front of the Garcia residence. "YGL" represents "Young Gangster Locos," a subset of the Norteno Criminal Street Gang that both Daniel Martinez and Pablo Lopez belonged to. A confrontation in the street developed after the Garcia brothers accused the Norteno gang members of disrespecting their house. Evidence during trial established that Jefe and Jair Garcia were associated with the Sureno Criminal Street Gang, arch rivals of the Norteno Gang.

After verbal gang challenges were exchanged, Daniel Martinez and Pablo Lopez disengaged the Garcia brothers and walked to the front door of a residence occupied by Kristian Sandoval. Daniel Martinez said "give me the gauge" to Kristian Sandoval. Kristian Sandoval handed a loaded sawed off shotgun to Pablo Lopez. Pablo Lopez hid the shot gun behind his back while he and Daniel Martinez re-engaged the Garcia brothers in the street. After the Garcia brothers refused to follow Pablo Lopez's command to "go to the corner," Pablo Lopez drew the shot gun from behind his back and pointed it at the Garcia brothers who took off running toward their residence. Pablo Lopez fired a single shotgun blast after Daniel Martinez said, "just do it." Jefe Garcia was struck in the head and arm by magnum buck shot gun pellets and died. Jair Garcia was gunned down in a separate shooting months later, unrelated to the December 8, 2005 shooting.

Deputy District Attorney Brennan read a statement authored by Maria Estrada, the mother of Jefte and Jair Garcia before sentencing was imposed. The statement read,

“I want justice to be done. It’s hard to get out of bed. I lose all my strength and I’ll be in bed for days at a time. I cry all the time and I will cry until I stop breathing. I can’t even see pictures of my sons because it is so difficult. I miss my sons so much.”

Pablo Lopez, the convicted shooter, is scheduled to be sentenced before Judge Shaver on August 11, 2008. Lopez is facing 50 years to life.

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