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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Re: Oropeza Drug Trafficking Organization

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MODESTO, CALIFORNIA - Stanislaus County District Attorney, Birgit Fladager, announced that John Loren Oropeza, 56, of Modesto, was sentenced on February 14, 2008 to serve 15 years in state prison. The sentence was imposed by The Honorable Judge Timothy Salter of the California Superior Court, Stanislaus County.

John Loren Oropeza was the head of the Oropeza Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) which was responsible for the trafficking and sales of methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin in the Stanislaus County area for the past 20 years. During that time, Oropeza and other members of his organization ran numerous drug houses in the area where various types of narcotics were distributed and sold at the street level.

The Modesto Police Department's Narcotic Enforcement Team (MNET) began investigating the Oropeza DTO in 2005 when they raided one of Oropeza's houses and uncovered a fortified drug house containing a large quantity of methamphetamine and heroin and evidence of drug sales. Unfortunately, Oropeza was able to elude capture and subsequently fled to Mexico in order to avoid arrest. Almost one (1) year later, Oropeza returned to the United States and was subsequently arrested at the border on the outstanding arrest warrant resulting from the 2005 raid. Oropeza was transported back to Stanislaus County.

Between 2005 and 2007, MNET was able to serve several search warrants on Oropeza DTO locations and identify additional members of the organization. Eight (8) additional suspects were arrested on various drug-related charges for their individual roles in the Oropeza DTO during the

course of the investigation. The charges ranged from the sale of narcotics to the operation of a drug house. The Stanislaus County District Attorney's Office charged all nine (9) defendants with various trafficking and distribution charges for methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin. As of this date, all charged members of the organization have been convicted and sentenced as follows:

John Loren Oropeza, 15 years California state prison

John Oropeza, Jr., 4 years California state prison

Esmeralda Garcia, 6 years California state prison

Ernest Brown, 11 years 8 months California state prison

Ernest Martin Farias, 3 years California state prison

Elizabeth Rose Drouet, 2 years California state prison

Valerie Vanater, 1 year Stanislaus county jail, 3 years formal felony probation

Timothy Ray Glover, 1 year Stanislaus county jail, 3 years formal felony probation

The numerous convictions against the Oropeza DTO are the result of the joint efforts of the Modesto Police Department Narcotics Enforcement Team (MNET) and Deputy District Attorney Abel C.K. Hung, assigned to the District Attorney's Major Narcotic Vendor Prosecution (MNVP) Unit.