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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Carol Shipley

Date: October 2, 2009

Assistant District Attorney

Re: Matthew John David Avila
Auto Thief Sentenced to
8 Years, 8 Months Prison

Phone: (209) 525-5550

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Matthew John David Avila, age 23, of Salida, was convicted of possession of a stolen vehicle, grand theft, and domestic violence. Avila also admitted having a prior conviction for residential burglary (a “strike” under California’s “Three Strikes” law) from April 2007 and for which Avila was on probation. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On December 6, 2008, Avila was waiting to be picked up at the home of a family friend who was a dependent adult in the area of Vermont Avenue in Turlock. Avila waited for the friend to fall asleep and then stole his wallet, leather 49ers jacket, DVD player and four X-Box games. Avila then left the home. The next morning Avila’s family friend called Adult Protective Services to report the theft. An arrest warrant was then issued for Avila.

On December 23, 2008 at approximately 10:00 p.m, Avila visited another friend’s home in Turlock. Avila waited for his friend to fall asleep and then stole two Christmas gifts from under their Christmas tree. Avila stole an antique Samurai sword and a Sirius XM satellite radio. The following morning, Avila’s friend reported the theft. A Turlock police officer observed Avila on Geer Road in Turlock pushing a 1988 silver GMC pick-up truck that had been reported stolen on December 22, 2008 out of Modesto. When the officer approached, Avila ran away and was able to elude capture. Another arrest warrant was issued for Avila.

On August 26, 2009 at approximately 5:00 p.m. in a parking lot on H Street in Modesto, a store employee reported to police a domestic disturbance between Avila and his girlfriend. Avila’s girlfriend told the responding officer that she and Avila started arguing three days prior. On August 23, 2009, she picked up her unemployment check and Avila started to accuse her of cheating on him. Avila dragged his girlfriend by the hair and hit her in the face which caused two black eyes. She stated that she was too scared to run away or call the police. The officer observed that Avila’s girlfriend had two black eyes. Avila then told the officer that he slapped her three days prior because he believed that she was cheating on him. Avila was arrested for all three incidents.

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable John Freeland sentenced Avila to eight years and eight months in state prison.

Stanislaus County residents can report suspected vehicle theft activity to their local law enforcement agency or contact the Stanislaus County Auto-Theft Task Force (STANCATT) at: (209) 545-7316.

IF YOU OBSERVE A THEFT IN PROGRESS, DIAL 911

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