



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 19, 2018
Re: Jeffrey Allen Maria
Murderer's parole grant again reversed by
Governor Brown

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Convicted double killer Jeffrey Allen Maria's June 6, 2018, parole grant was overturned by Governor Brown on October 12, 2018.

On June 6, 2018, Maria was granted parole for the third time. His two previous grants in July 2015 and January 2017 were overturned by Governor Brown after requests by the victim's family, District Attorney Birgit Fladager, California State Senator Cathleen Galgiani, and members of the public who wrote letters to the Governor urging him to act.

"This is the third time in the last three years that we have asked for a reversal by the Governor of the Parole Board's decision for Mr. Maria. Maria's parole would have resulted in a complete miscarriage of justice for the victim's family, and for our communities. Each time the family attends these parole board hearings, they have to relive the pain of this heinous crime. The family of the victims and Stanislaus County can find some solace in knowing that those behind this atrocity have been served justice. I would like to thank the Governor for returning some integrity to our justice system by reversing the decision of the Parole board," said Senator Galgiani.

In June of 1979, Jeffrey Maria, Marty Spears, Ronald Anderson and Darren Lee were all involved in the brutal killing of Philip and Kathryn Ranzo. Kathryn Ranzo was also sexually assaulted during the violent home invasion. All four defendants were convicted of double murder and sentenced to life in prison.

Despite being previously denied parole, recent changes in the law allow Maria and his crime partners to accelerate their parole hearings so that they occur once every year instead of no sooner than every three years. Each time, surviving Ranzo family members and next of kin suffer the repeated emotional pain of having to travel to various prisons to speak out against parole for each killer.

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Co-defendant Marty Spears also had his January 2017 grant of parole reversed last year by Governor Brown. Then on July 24, 2018, he was denied parole for five years.

Co-defendant Ronald Anderson, despite repeatedly being denied parole in 1993, 1994, 1997, 2001, 2007, 2011 and 2016 was granted parole in December of 2017. Governor Brown reversed that on May 04, 2018. His next tentative parole hearing date is set for sometime in June 2019.

Co-defendant Darren Lee has been denied parole in 1997, 2002, 2008, 2012 and 2015.

Each time one of these defendants comes up for parole, the surviving Ranzo family members attend each hearing. During a September 19th, 2018 press conference at the State Capital sponsored by Senator Galgiani, the Ranzo family estimated that they have attended over twenty parole hearings in the past several years.

Unfortunately, even after the Governor's latest reversal, Maria will still be eligible for another parole hearing tentatively set for sometime in December 2019. The Ranzo family has already indicated they will attend.

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CDC# C17317 Date: 08/28/2017

INDETERMINATE SENTENCE PAROLE RELEASE REVIEW
(Penal Code Section 3041.2)

JEFFREY MARIA, C-17565
First Degree Murder (two counts)

AFFIRM: _____

MODIFY: _____

REVERSE: _____ X _____

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On June 25, 1979, Jeffrey Maria, Darren Lee, Ronald Anderson, and Marty Spears planned to burglarize the home of Phillip and Kathryn Ranzo. Once there, Mr. Anderson waited in the car while the other men approached the home. Armed with pistols, a sawed-off rifle, and knives, they knocked on the door. Mr. Ranzo answered, and the men pretended to be out of gas and asked to use the Ranzos' telephone. The phone was not working, so Mr. Ranzo offered to give them a can of gas and opened the garage door. The three men followed Mr. Ranzo to the garage, and Mr. Spears pulled out a gun and pointed it at Mr. Ranzo. Mr. Spears then hit Mr. Ranzo in the head approximately six times with a bat or axe handle. Mr. Ranzo was hog-tied; a rope was placed around his neck and tied to his hands and feet. Mr. Spears also cut Mr. Ranzo's face and head, and stabbed and slashed his neck, killing him. They then went into the living room where they found Mrs. Ranzo. Mr. Spears ordered Mrs. Ranzo at gunpoint to go upstairs. Once upstairs, Mr. Spears raped Mrs. Ranzo, and then hog-tied her and beat her in the head with a blunt object. Mr. Spears also slashed Mrs. Ranzo's throat and stabbed her neck several times, killing her. While Mr. Spears was with Mrs. Ranzo, Mr. Maria, and Mr. Lee ransacked the home and took \$2,000 in cash, a shotgun, and two diamond pendants. Mr. Maria and Mr. Lee left the house, and Mr. Anderson drove them home before returning to pick up Mr. Spears.

GOVERNING LAW

The question I must answer is whether Mr. Maria will pose a current danger to the public if released from prison. The circumstances of the crime can provide evidence of current dangerousness when the record also establishes that something in the inmate's pre- or post-incarceration history, or the inmate's current demeanor and mental state, indicate that the circumstances of the crime remain probative of current dangerousness. (*In re Lawrence* (2008) 44 Cal. 4th 1181, 1214.) Additionally, I am required to give "great weight to the diminished culpability of juveniles as compared to adults, the hallmark features of youth, and any subsequent growth and increased maturity of the prisoner" when determining a youthful offender's suitability for parole. (Pen. Code, § 4801, subd. (c).)

DECISION

The Board of Parole Hearings found Mr. Maria suitable for parole based on his age at the time of the crime, good behavior in prison, self-help programming, educational and vocational accomplishments, staff commendations, his remorse, acceptance of responsibility, and parole plans.

I acknowledge that Mr. Maria was only 17 years old when he participated in this horrific double murder. Mr. Maria reported that he had some instability in his life following his parents' divorce when he was 3. He recalled that his older brother blamed him for their parents' divorce, that his family frequently relocated, and that he felt isolated. He also claimed that he lacked communication skills, was impulsive, and did not consider the long-term consequences of his actions. The psychologist who evaluated Mr. Maria in 2018 stated that "Mr. Maria's life crime appears to be a culmination of a traumatic childhood history of physical and emotional abuse" and "negative peer influences and substance misuse."

Mr. Maria is now 58 years old and has served 39 years in prison. I commend Mr. Maria for continuing college courses, receiving positive work ratings, receiving laudatory reports from correctional officers, not incurring any additional rule violations, and serving as a hospice volunteer. I also commend Mr. Maria for continuing to participate in self-help programming, including Alcoholics Anonymous, Victim Impact, and Criminal Thinking. I carefully examined the record for evidence demonstrating Mr. Maria's increased maturity and rehabilitation, and gave great weight to all the factors relevant to his diminished culpability as a juvenile, his hallmark features of youth, and his subsequent growth in prison during my consideration of his suitability for parole. However, these factors are outweighed by evidence that he remains unsuitable for parole.

Mr. Maria participated in a cruel and disturbing crime. Mr. Maria and his crime partners planned a burglary which ended with Mr. Ranzo being bound and beaten with his head, face, and neck stabbed and slashed, and Mrs. Ranzo brutally raped with her neck stabbed and slashed. Mr. Maria's actions continue to have a far-reaching impact on the Ranzos' family and community. Family members have appeared at Mr. Maria's hearings to express their ongoing sense of loss and many members of the public have written to oppose parole in this matter.

I reversed the Board's 2015 grant of parole because Mr. Maria minimized his role in planning and carrying out the crime to rob and kill the Ranzos. His behavior in prison was also concerning because Mr. Maria recently participated in mutual combat in 2011 and attempted to escape from prison in 2006. Two years later, I reversed the Board's 2017 grant of parole because Mr. Maria continued to downplay his role in the crime at his hearing. He stated he only knew of the plan to commit the burglary but was unaware of the plan to kill the Ranzos. He stated he never went into the house because he was asked to guard Mr. Ranzo in the garage. However, despite acting as the guard, he "couldn't really see" Mr. Ranzo and "was not really watching him." His statements then were inconsistent with evidence in the record.

Mr. Maria has a different version of these events. He maintains that he never saw Mr. Ranzo being tied up, beaten, or stabbed and he continues to assert that he never stepped foot in the house to steal their belongings. The record is somewhat muddled and his crime partners have given contrary accounts over time. Whether or not Mr. Maria is telling the truth about his willingness to commit violence or his advanced knowledge that the Ranzos were likely to be killed, this heinous crime has left a lasting mark on the family and on the community. Not many crimes are worse than a home invasion, rape, and double murder.

It is not without significance that Mr. Maria's conduct in prison has improved and that he has taken steps to advance his education, volunteer to help others, and engage in other activities of a positive nature. Given however the vicious nature of this crime and its tragic consequences, I am not prepared to approve his release.

CONCLUSION

I have considered all of the evidence in the record that is relevant to whether Mr. Maria is currently dangerous and conclude that he is not yet suitable for parole.

Decision Date: October 12, 2018


EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor, State of California