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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 31, 2018
Re: George Johnson, Jr.
Convicted Killer Granted Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that George Johnson Jr., age 45, of Modesto, was found suitable for parole during an October 24, 2018 hearing of the Board of Parole Hearings held at Folsom State Prison. Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey Mangar appeared at the prison on behalf of the People.

On the night of May 31, 1992, Johnson was a passenger in a stolen car driving northbound on Highway 99 in Stanislaus County. Johnson used a high-powered rifle to shoot at the driver of another car in the next lane who he mistakenly believed was responsible for Johnson's brother going to jail. Johnson missed the driver and instead hit passenger Danny Reid in the neck, killing him instantly. Reid was married, the father of four little girls and worked for the city of Modesto as an Affirmative Action Officer.

Johnson and his friends then proceeded to a house party in west Modesto where he used the rifle to spray shots towards the house and party attendees. Some of the partygoers in the front yard returned fire, yet no one in the vehicle nor at the house was struck.

The next day, the stolen vehicle was located a few blocks from where Johnson lived with his parents. Although the rifle was never recovered, shell casings were found in the vehicle linking him to the shooting. Detectives learned that Johnson had recently purchased an assault rifle and questioned the person who sold him the gun. When Johnson heard this, he drove by the seller's home and shot at him. He missed, but did strike the seller's girlfriend who was injured but survived. Johnson was arrested and charged with the shooting. Later, while in custody, he tried to hire a contract killer to murder the seller and seller's girlfriend. A Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Johnson of an assault with a deadly weapon causing great bodily injury. He was sentenced to serve eight years in state prison.

During this time, detectives received information that Johnson was responsible for the murder of Danny Reid. During a search of Johnson's bedroom, detectives located property from the stolen car. Although Johnson denied being in the car, several witnesses testified at his jury trial that Johnson was the shooter and a member of the Modesto Hit Squad criminal street gang. A jury

convicted Johnson of second degree murder, two counts of attempted murder, two counts of a drive-by shooting and auto theft. He was sentenced to 29 years and 8 months-to-life in state prison.

During the parole hearing last week, prison records showed that Johnson had received eight rule violations including manufacturing alcohol in 1999, fighting in 2001, participation in a prison riot in 2006, and refusing to sleep in a dorm room in 2007. Another prisoner provided information that Johnson was in a prison gang as recently as 2010.

Johnson was previously denied parole for three years in 2017. However, due to recent changes to the law, Johnson was able to advance the hearing date to this year.

During this hearing, Johnson showed no emotional reaction when talking about the murder and crimes he committed. Prosecutor Mangar argued against his release based on Johnson's lack of remorse and continuing violent behavior even in the structured environment of state prison.

Given all the information available, the Parole Board felt that Johnson was no longer a risk to public safety and believed Johnson when he testified that he was never in a gang. The Commissioners then decided to grant Johnson parole and release him back into society.

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