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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 1, 2019
Re: Phinehas Lamont Parker
Parole Denied

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Phinehas Lamont Parker, age 47, of Modesto, was denied parole following a February 22, 2019, four-hour hearing before the Board of Parole Hearings held inside Folsom State Prison. Deputy District Attorney John Goold attended the hearing on behalf of the People.

On September 12, 1997, Parker and a co-defendant, both wearing ski masks and armed with handguns, broke into the Modesto home of Manuel Ruelas and threatened him and his wife with death if they did not turn over whatever money they had. After taking money and jewelry, Parker shot Ruelas in the face at close range, causing blood spatter onto the work boots he was wearing. Parker's girlfriend and later wife, Clarissa Hurtado, pawned several of the stolen jewelry items. A search warrant of Hurtado's home revealed Parker's work boots and letters addressed to him. The boots were sent to the Department of Justice Crime Lab and blood spatter matched the victim.

While in custody, Parker was recorded telling Hurtado during jail visits what to say when she testified about the jewelry. Later, Parker's first jury trial was interrupted when he was recorded during another jail visit threatening to "choke out" his appointed attorney. After being assigned a new attorney, a second jury trial commenced but was stopped when his counsel became ill. The third trial went all the way to verdict and Parker was convicted by a Stanislaus County jury on April 12, 1999 and sentenced to serve life in prison.

Parker has consistently denied his guilt. He is a lifelong member of the "Crips" criminal street gang and since being in prison has continued his association with the "Crips." He has also repeatedly violated prison rules and failed to do anything towards self-improvement or understanding the criminal mindset. Prosecutor Goold urged the Commissioners to deny parole for at least five years given Parker's misconduct while in custody, his psychological assessment which determined him to be a moderate risk for violence if released into the community and his lack of candor when answering the board's questions throughout the four-hour hearing.

After deliberations, the two-member panel denied Parker parole for three years and urged him to take as many self-improvement classes as possible before his next hearing. Unfortunately, Parker was 25 years old at the time of the offense so he is eligible, as a "youthful offender", to petition to accelerate his next parole hearing in as soon as eighteen months.

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