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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 3, 2019
Re: Pedro Alvarez, Jr.
Gang member sentenced to prison for aiding
and abetting a drive-by shooting

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Pedro Alvarez, Jr., age 29 of Ceres, was convicted of aiding and abetting a gang killing and has been sentenced to state prison. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On July 4, 2009 at approximately 9:50 p.m., Alvarez and other members of a local Norteno criminal street gang were hunting for rival gang members. The driver, Abel Rodriguez, was armed with a fully-automatic machine gun and Alvarez sat next to him in the front passenger seat. They drove to a house in west Modesto after receiving information that rival Sureno gang members were having a July 4th barbeque in the front yard of a residence. As they stopped in front of the house, Rodriguez rolled down the driver's window, turned off the car's headlights and fired his machine gun into the crowd, striking three people. One rival Sureno gang member and an innocent bystander were seriously injured. Another innocent bystander, a migrant laborer, was shot three times in the back and killed.

After leaving the shooting, Rodriguez led responding sheriff's deputies on a high-speed pursuit southbound on Highway 99. During the chase, the driver handed the machine gun to Alvarez, who then threw it out the window. At the West Main Street exit in Turlock, the driver lost control of the car and crashed. Both the driver and Alvarez were removed from the vehicle and arrested.

A shell casing found on the floorboard of the vehicle matched twelve other shell casings left at the scene of the killing. The gun Alvarez threw out the window was recovered by law enforcement and determined to be the firearm used in the drive-by shooting.

After his arrest, Alvarez admitted to being in the Norteno gang but lied about Rodriguez doing the shooting. During Rodriguez's jury trial, a defense gang expert, Jesse DeLaCruz, gave testimony insinuating that another gang member was responsible for the shooting. DeLaCruz was a long time Norteno Nuestra Familia prison gang member who has since dropped out of the gang and now regularly testifies in gang cases for the defense. He was paid \$10,000 for his testimony.

On March 28, 2019, a Stanislaus County jury convicted Abel Rodriguez of first degree murder and two counts of attempted murder with firearm and gang enhancements. A court trial on Rodriguez's prior felony convictions is currently set for April 4, 2019.

On April 2, 2019, Alvarez pled no contest to aiding and abetting in the unlawful killing of another for the benefit of a criminal street gang, a "strike" offense under California's "Three Strikes" law, which can be used to double any future felony convictions Alvarez may receive after being released on parole. Upon entry of his plea, Judge Nancy Ashley sentenced Alvarez to serve thirteen years in state prison.

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