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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 2, 2010
Re: Life Without Parole Sentence for
Killer of CHP Officer Earl Scott

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced that accused killer Columbus Allen pled guilty this morning to the February 17, 2006 murder of California Highway Patrol Officer Earl Scott. The officer had pulled Allen over for a traffic violation on Highway 99 just outside of Modesto. Allen pled guilty to murder with use of a gun and admitted the special circumstances of murder of a peace officer in the performance of his duties, murder to avoid arrest, and that the murder was intentional and perpetrated by means of discharging a firearm from a vehicle at another person outside the vehicle with intent to inflict death. He also pled guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and admitted having served a prior prison term.

After four years of delays, the case was scheduled to begin last week in Sacramento County where it had been moved as a result of a change of venue. The Fifth District Court of Appeals imposed a stay in the proceedings on Monday, July 26th in order to consider a writ filed by the defense to challenge the Sacramento judge who was assigned the trial. If convicted of the charges, a penalty phase would have followed the trial during which the jury would have been asked whether to recommend imposition of the death penalty.

Allen's lawyers approached prosecutors early last week indicating that Allen would be willing to plead guilty to all charges--and waive the right to appeal--for a sentence of life without the possibility of parole in lieu of prosecutors continuing to seek the death penalty.

After consulting with family members and friends of Officer Earl Scott and learning of their support for this resolution, the District Attorney's Office agreed to accept the plea offer by the defense. "While there may never be such a thing as 'closure' for the friends and family of Officer Scott, there will at least be finality to the criminal case. There will be no decades-long appeal process for them to endure and constantly worry about the possibility of reversal," said District Attorney Birgit Fladager.

After the defendant entered a guilty plea, family and friends of Officer Scott had the opportunity to give victim impact statements. Bill Scott, Officer Scott's father, declined to give a statement. A statement from his biological mother, Judy Whitney, was read. Officer Robert Hart of the Modesto Police Department and Officer Brandon Moore of the California Highway Patrol both addressed the court. The Honorable Judge Scott Steffen sentenced Columbus Allen to life in prison without the possibility of parole in addition to 3 years for the charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm and having served a prior prison term.

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