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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: February 14, 2020
Re: Michael Romero
Convicted killer denied parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Michael Romero, age 47, of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during a January 23, 2020 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings conducted at Solano State Prison in Vacaville. Deputy District Attorney Monroe Tyler appeared at the hearing representing the People.

From August 3 to August 4, 1995, Romero and six of his friends were hanging out and drinking alcohol together. At some point, they decided to go to another apartment to continue partying. While crossing a street, they confronted Alex Bernal, who had been driving in the area looking for his minor daughter. Romero yelled at Bernal who stopped his car. When the two exchanged words, Romero approached and stabbed Bernal twice in the heart, killing him. Responding police located Romero nearby and arrested him, his clothing still splattered with the Bernal's blood.

On July 17, 1996, Romero was convicted by a Stanislaus County jury of second-degree murder along with an enhancement for using a deadly weapon. Now retired Judge David VanderWall sentenced Romero to serve 16 years-to-life in state prison.

Romero has a lengthy criminal history including convictions from Stanislaus and Santa Clara counties for drug sales, theft, vandalism, assault and battery, domestic violence, battery on a peace officer and assault with a deadly weapon. While in prison Romero has assaulted other inmates, participated in a riot, promoted gang activity, was in possession of gang materials and facilitated sending coded messages between gang members. His last rule violation for gang activity occurred in 2015, resulting in an extended stay in the special housing unit (SHU) segregated away from other inmates until 2016.

A prison psychologist who examined Romero in 2019 rated his risk for violence as "moderate" if he were to be released from prison. A previous psychologist who examined him in 2016 had rated his risk for violence as "high."

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At the hearing on January 23, Deputy District Attorney Tyler argued for a five-year parole denial based on the continuing safety risk that Romero poses to the community if released and his lack of genuine insight into the crime and his criminal behavior. The Board of Parole hearings agreed and denied parole for five years.

This was Romero's fourth parole hearing. He will be eligible for another parole hearing in 2025, however that date may be accelerated earlier based upon changes in the law.

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