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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by SJS

Kern County District Attorney Lisa Green announced a significant conviction in a gang homicide case today. On August 27, 2018, a Kern County jury convicted Jose Garcia, Jr. of First Degree Murder while lying in wait and for the benefit of a Criminal Street Gang, along with three other assaults with a firearm and gang charges. Garcia, a Lamont 13 gang member, was 31 at the time of the offense. The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Richard Choi.

On the afternoon of December 2, 2017, Kern County Sheriff deputies were dispatched to La Mexicana Bakery located at 11121 Main Street in Lamont, CA. Yesenia Gutierrez, 27, of Lamont, and Rodolfo Garcia, 28, of Arvin, had just finished shopping at the bakery. While leaving the location, the defendant stalled them while an accomplice walked up and started shooting at Rodolfo Garcia, who was hit seven times and fatally injured as he ran away. Joel and Maria Mendiola were walking into Mariscos Las Islitas restaurant further down the street from the shooting when Mr. Mendiola was shot in his right jaw causing severe injury. The motivation for the defendant's homicidal acts were believed to be retribution for an earlier homicide the same day of Andy Medina, 20, of Lamont, also a Lamont 13 gang member. The defendant was caught on December 14, 2017, with a loaded 9mm semi-automatic handgun. DNA and ballistics evidence confirmed it was the same semi-automatic handgun used in the incident.

The sentencing date is set for October 9, 2018, before the Honorable John S. Somers. Garcia faces a sentence of life without the possibility of parole.