



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

ANDREA S. KOHLER
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:

DDA Gina Nargie
(661) 868-2340
DDA David McKillop
(661) 868-2330

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Parole Denied for Three Strike Offender Jose Vargas
CDC #C52556; Kern County Court Case number SC067501A

Kern District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced that the California Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) denied release to convicted three strikes offender Jose Vargas. On September 12, 2024, BPH found that Vargas continues to pose a current and unreasonable risk to public safety. Representing the District Attorney's Office was Deputy District Attorney Gina Nargie.

On July 9, 1996, Vargas was in the custody of the Kern County Sheriff's Department at a pretrial holding facility. While in custody, Vargas stabbed another inmate. Vargas entered the victim's cell with two other inmates and demanded the victim's commissary items. When the victim refused to give him the items, Vargas stabbed the victim in the back of the head.

On October 17, 1996, a Kern County jury found Vargas guilty of robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. After Vargas was found guilty, in a bifurcated proceeding, a Kern County Judge found true the special allegations that Vargas had committed three prior strikes and served four prison terms where he did not remain free of custody for more than 5 years. On November 15, 1996, a Kern County Judge sentenced Vargas to serve 34 years to life in prison. On June 8, 2022, after changes to the law, Vargas' sentence was modified to 25 years to life.

On September 12, 2024, the BPH conducted Vargas' second parole hearing. Vargas, age 64, has served approximately 28 years in state prison. At the parole hearing, the commissioners focused on Vargas' institutional behavior, substance abuse and drug activities both in the community and in prison, rehabilitative programming, and insight into his criminal history that started in 1978. The Kern County District Attorney's Office asked the BPH to deny parole. The BPH found that Vargas was not suitable for parole and posed a current unreasonable risk of danger to society. The Board of Parole has the option of denying an inmate parole for a period of 15, 10, 7, 5 or 3 years. Vargas' commissioners issued a three-year denial. As such, Vargas' next hearing could take place in 18 months.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; "Vargas was in an out of prison for nearly two decades, a true indication of the danger he poses to our community. His parole denial is essential for public safety."