



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

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH RUSSELL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

February 24, 2026

MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:

DDA Klaudine Waldersen
(661) 868-2340

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by CJZ
Press Release #26-18

Jury Verdict Returned For Assault with a Deadly Weapon In Road Rage Case

People v. Abel Rodriguez Almanza: Kern County Superior Court Case BF181570A

(Bakersfield) - Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant felony conviction today. On February 24, 2026, a Kern County jury found Abel Rodriguez Almanza guilty of two counts of Assault with a Deadly Weapon and one count of Reckless Driving following a violent road rage incident.

The incident occurred on June 23, 2020, when Almanza pursued the victims, a married couple, for several miles after becoming enraged during a merge in traffic on Highway 99. After the initial confrontation, Almanza continued to follow the victims off the freeway and onto surface streets. During the pursuit, he aggressively targeted their vehicle and ultimately drove his SUV into the victims' car as they attempted to make a lawful right turn onto South H Street in Bakersfield.

The impact caused the victims' vehicle to lose control, cross multiple lanes of traffic, and enter a canal that was filled with water. The vehicle became partially submerged, and both occupants were forced to escape through rising water. Evidence presented at the jury trial showed that Almanza admitted to law enforcement that he was in "road rage mode" and that he struck the victims' vehicle during the encounter.

At the conclusion of the trial, the jury returned guilty verdicts on all three counts. In a separate proceeding, the court found true that Almanza suffered a prior strike conviction for carjacking, which elevates his potential sentence on new felony convictions.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, "Road rage is not just a momentary lapse in judgment – in many cases, it is a crime. Allowing anger to override reason and using a two-ton vehicle as a deadly weapon can result in catastrophic consequences. This conviction for assault with a deadly weapon and reckless driving reflects our community's commitment to protecting innocent drivers from senseless violence."

Following the verdict, the Court remanded Almanza into custody pending sentencing. Sentencing is scheduled for March 24, 2026 before the Honorable John Brownlee in Department 6 of the Kern County Superior Court. Almanza's prior strike conviction qualifies him for elevated sentencing of up to 13 years in prison.

