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MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Re: 2nd Degree Murder Trial Conviction: People v. Thomas Santiago BF169645A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant homicide conviction today. In a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Christine Antonios, a Kern County jury found defendant Thomas Santiago guilty of 2nd Degree murder and Malicious Assault by an Inmate Serving a Life Sentence.

On February 12, 2016, Correctional Officers heard a noise coming from a cell at California Correctional Institution, in Tehachapi, where victim Miguel Alejo and defendant Thomas Santiago were each serving a prison sentence. When the officers approached the cell, they saw the defendant on top of Miguel Alejo with his hands around Miguel Alejo's neck, strangling him. The officers attempted to subdue Santiago by flooding the cell with pepper spray. Santiago continued to strangle Alejo, so officers forcefully removed Santiago from the victim and removed Santiago from the cell. Life saving measures were attempted, but Miguel Alejo was pronounced dead an hour after the assault. The cause of death was neck compressions consistent with manual strangulation.

Advised of the conviction, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented that "The effects of homicides against prison inmates ripple far beyond the prison walls. Any homicide occurring in Kern County will be aggressively investigated and prosecuted by the Kern County District Attorney's Office."

Thomas Santiago was serving a life sentence for attempted murder and was scheduled to become parole-eligible in 2023.

Sentencing is set for September 18, 2019 before Superior Court Judge John Oglesby. Defendant Thomas Santiago faces a sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

Miguel Alejo was serving a six-year sentence for robbery due to a 2011 conviction.