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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by JAK
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Re: DUI Convict Esteban Valdez Gutierrez Apprehended in Mexico: BF166454A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer joined Bakersfield Chief of Police Greg Terry today in announcing today that Esteban Valdez Gutierrez has been apprehended in Mexico after with the assistance of the United States Marshall's Pacific Southwest Regional Fugitive Task Force, which worked in conjunction with District Attorney and BPD investigators to locate and ultimately apprehend Gutierrez.

Gutierrez was charged in December of 2016 with felony charges of driving under the influence causing serious injury after investigation identified him as the driver of a vehicle that ran a red light on Calloway Drive on December 1, 2016, in Bakersfield. In running the red light, Gutierrez collided with a vehicle driven by a 23 year-old woman who was turning into a church when she was struck. The woman sustained major injuries, never regained consciousness, and remains to this day in a vegetative state. Gutierrez fled the scene, but was identified and arrested.

From the outset of the case, the District Attorney and Bakersfield Police Department sought to ensure Gutierrez was held in custody pending the resolution of the case. Bail was initially set at \$150,000, and was increased at the request of the District Attorney's office to \$500,000 on December 8, 2016. The court denied a subsequent request from Gutierrez to reduce his bail on February 21, 2017. Gutierrez again sought reduction of his bail on March 23, 2017, and despite the continuing opposition from the District Attorney, the court granted the request to reduce bail, and reduced the bail on the case to \$141,500. The court imposed additional terms of release on bail, including that Gutierrez was not to drive a vehicle and must be on a GPS monitor.

Gutierrez posted the \$141,500 bail on March 24, 2017 and remained out of custody for the remainder of the court proceedings. Gutierrez attended subsequent court hearings and on February 24, 2020, he changed his pleas pursuant to an agreement that would include a sentence of 12 years, 8 months in state prison. Gutierrez entered no contest pleas and was found guilty of driving under the influence causing injury, and an additional enhancement for causing injury so traumatic as to cause a comatose state due to

brain injury upon the victim. Gutierrez also pled no contest to Felony Hit and Run resulting in permanent, serious injury. Gutierrez also admitted having a previous “strike” conviction.

Gutierrez was ordered to appear for sentencing on May 28, 2020, at which time he was anticipated to be sentenced to 12 years, 8 months in prison and be taken into custody to serve his sentence.

On the morning of May 28, 2020, Gutierrez’ GPS monitor indicated a tamper alert, and responding officers located the GPS monitor, which had been cut off. Gutierrez did not appear in court, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Since his failure to appear for sentencing, the Kern County District Attorney’s Office, the Bakersfield Police Department and the United States Marshall’s Office has been working to locate and apprehend Gutierrez and developed information on Gutierrez’ location in Tijuana, Mexico.

On August 24, 2021, The United States Marshall’s Pacific Southwest Regional Fugitive Task Force, working in conjunction with Mexican authorities, successfully arrested Gutierrez in Tijuana, Mexico. Gutierrez is expected to be transported back to the United States by the Marshall’s Office, where he will ultimately be returned to the Kern County Jail pending the imposition of his prison sentence.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the arrest: “After 18 months of hiding in a foreign country to evade punishment, the long arm of the law has caught up to Esteban Gutierrez. Gutierrez’ crimes have caused irreparable harm to our community and forever impacted the life of the victim and her family. As state laws and policies make releases on bail increasingly likely, delays in justice and opportunities at flight have increased. The cooperation and efforts of those who argued against his release in the first place and those ultimately tasked with bringing him to justice is an example of how dedicated our local law enforcement community is to public safety and achieving justice for victims.”