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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Approved by JAK
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Re: Second-Degree Murder Conviction, People v. Esparza, BF184712A

Today District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer made an announcement, a Kern County Jury found defendant, Jose Luis Valdez Esparza, guilty of second-degree murder along with an allegation that he personally used a knife in the commission of the murder. He was also found guilty of an additional crime of robbery. Jose Esparza faces a possible sentence of 21 years to life in prison.

On December 16th, 2020, the Bakersfield Police Department responded to Motel 6 on Easton Ave to a victim of a stabbing. Upon arrival officers found Corey Wayne Thomas suffering from multiple stab wounds. Corey Thomas was transported to Kern Medical Center where he succumbed to his injuries. A homicide investigation revealed Jose Luis Valdez Esparza as the suspect. Video surveillance from the Motel 6 showed Jose Esparza's attempt to take property from Corey Thomas's possession. A fight ensued and Jose Esparza stabbed Corey Thomas 4 times, one of which was fatal. On March 16th, 2021, Bakersfield Police Officers responded to the J.C. Penney at the Valley Plaza mall for a report of a robbery. The defendant, Esparza, was identified as entering the store stealing merchandise, and while attempting to leave brandishing a knife at the asset protection agents. The defendant escaped to Wilson Park where he was arrested for the robbery and the murder.

Jose Esparza is scheduled to be sentenced on November 16th, 2021.