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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Re: Trial Verdict In Case Where Criminal Threats Targeted Judge and Police Chief: People v. Gustavo Chavez, Kern County Superior Court Case BF187301A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant trial conviction today in a case where Criminal Threats were made against a Kern County Superior Court Judge and a Police Chief. In a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Tyson McCoy, a Kern County jury found defendant Gustavo Chavez guilty of criminal threats against a Superior Court judge, criminal threats against a local chief of police, threatening a judicial officer, resisting arrest by threat of violence with the use of a machete, and delaying, obstructing, or resisting arrest. The jury announced its verdict on February 28, 2022, however, a separate jury trial regarding Chavez' prior conviction was held on Tuesday March 1, 2022. The jury also found true the allegation the defendant had suffered a prior 'strike' offense on a previous first-degree burglary case.

From June 2021 to August 2021, Chavez sent several text messages to his former Probation officer in which he threatened to kill a Kern County Superior Court judge and the Kern County Park Ranger Chief of Police. The threatened judge had previously sentenced the defendant for a prior criminal threat against the Park Ranger Chief in 2019. Chavez told his former Probation officer in text messages that he was "here for vengeance," referring specifically to the Judge by name and title. On August 13, 2021, Chavez texted the probation officer, advising that he intended to kill the judge as soon as he found out the judge's home address. In several subsequent messages, Chavez repeatedly stated, in graphic and violent terms, exactly how he intended to carry out his threats.

Chavez's threats also extended to the Kern County Park Ranger Chief, who was the subject of a previous case against Chavez for additional criminal threats. Chavez' threats to the Chief included explicit and graphic threats to kill the Chief.

On September 13, 2021, members of the Bakersfield Police Department's Special Investigations Division attempted to arrest Chavez as he was cutting trees at a residence in Bakersfield. When the officers attempted to take him into custody, Chavez began walking angrily at one of the detectives while wielding a machete and shouting, "you're going to have to shoot me" multiple times. Chavez refused repeated

demands to drop the machete and was ultimately subdued when a Bakersfield police officer deployed a taser, allowing officers to apprehend Chavez without resorting to more deadly force.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction: “Crimes targeting police officers, judges, and members of the justice system not only impact the victims targeted but are also a direct assault on the basic rule of law. Kern County will not allow its judges and police officers to be targets for intimidation or retaliation, and anyone that attempts to interfere or retaliate against justice can expect a strong response from my office.”

Sentencing is scheduled for March 29, 2022, in Department 7 of the Kern County Superior Court before the Honorable Brian McNamara, where Chavez faces a sentence of up to 16 years in prison.