

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

**SOLEDAD MAN CONVICTED OF VEHICLE THEFT
SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR 5 YEARS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2017

**CONTACT: Nina Sandhu, Deputy District Attorney
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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that on March 15, 2017, Joel Antonio Hernandez, age 32, a resident of Soledad, was sentenced to five years for vehicle theft by Monterey Superior Court Judge Pamela Butler. On January 18, 2017, Hernandez pled guilty to three felony counts of vehicle theft and a misdemeanor charge of grand theft.

On three separate occasions, November 18, 2015, December 30, 2015 and January 1, 2016, Hernandez arranged to meet separate victims through a social media dating site. After meeting and engaging with the victims at either their home or motel, Hernandez would steal their cars. On one such occasion, after spending a couple of hours with one of the three victims, Hernandez stole several personal items from this victim's home and took the victim's car that was parked just outside the home.

Vehicle theft is widespread in Monterey County. The District Attorney's Office-Economic Vehicle Theft Unit works in conjunction with the Monterey County Sheriff's Department Multi-Agency Detail for Commercial Auto Theft (MADCAT) in investigating and deterring vehicle theft throughout the County. Members of the public having information about possible vehicle theft are encouraged to report what they know to DA Investigator Maribel Torres-Hart at 831-883-7588 or District Attorney's Office Fraud Hotline at 831-755-3224, or CHP Detective Chuck Rodriguez at 831-755-3818 or MCSO Detective Ken Owen at 831-755-7279.

These cases were investigated by Salinas Police Officers Steven Hoyte, Alejandro Magana, John McNeil and CSUMB Officer Robin Leland.

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