

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

SOLEDAD MAN FACES LIFE IN PRISON WITHOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE AFTER JURY CONVICTS HIM OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER IN EXECUTION-STYLE SHOOTING DEATH OF THE 19-YEAR-OLD MOTHER OF HIS CHILD

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Ernesto Hernandez, age 30 and of Soledad, was found guilty by jury of first degree murder and residential burglary. The jury also found true the special allegations that Hernandez committed the murder while lying in wait and that he personally used a firearm in the commission of the felonies. The jury's verdict followed a two-and-a-half-week trial before the Honorable Pamela L. Butler.

On the afternoon of March 29, 2016, family members found Abigail Gasca-Chavez, age 19, dead in her home from seven gunshot wounds to her head and face. Hernandez is the father of one of Gasca-Chavez's children. Evidence from home surveillance cameras throughout Greenfield showed Hernandez pursuing Gasca-Chavez by car during the morning, and then caught Hernandez confronting the victim outside her home. Video later showed him driving past her house when Gasca-Chavez was gone and entering through an unlocked door, where he waited approximately 16 minutes until she and her 2-year-old entered the house. Less than a minute later, he ran from the home. Family members discovered her body approximately 25 minutes later after a neighbor found her child alone and crying outside.

That same day cell phone and video evidence demonstrated that Hernandez left Monterey County and drove to a bus station in Los Angeles, where he left his car and bought a one-way ticket to McAllen, Texas. From there, he crossed into Mexico, where he was later arrested and deported to the United States to face charges.

The case was investigated by the Greenfield Police Department, the Monterey County District Attorney's Office, and the United States Marshals Gulf Coast Violent Offenders and Fugitive Task Force.

Hernandez will be in back in court on October 20, 2017 for the Court to determine whether he has suffered two prior strike convictions that are alleged for 2005 convictions for attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon.

At the time of sentencing he faces life in prison without the possibility of parole.