

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

SOLEDAD MAN SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON WITHOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE FOR FIRST DEGREE EXECUTION-STYLE MURDER OF 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 sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the first degree murder of 19-year-old Abigail Gasca-Chavez, the mother of his child.

In October, a jury found Hernandez guilty of first degree murder and residential burglary with use of a firearm. The jury also found true the special allegation that Hernandez committed the murder while lying in wait, which made him eligible for a sentence of life without the possibility of parole. Hernandez has two prior strike convictions from 2005 for attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon. 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. 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.