

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

“NO HOME OR PLACE OR VEHICLE IS SAFE FROM YOU.” JUDGE SENTENCES SALINAS AND TORO PARK BURGLAR TO EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS TO LIFE IN PRISON

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Salinas resident Ramon Bernal, age 34, was sentenced today by Monterey County Superior Court Judge Andrew Liu to eighty-five years to life in prison after being found guilty by jury of a 2016 crime spree in Salinas and Toro Park.

Bernal's crime spree began on March 3, 2016, when he committed a brazen, midday residential burglary in the Creekbridge neighborhood in Salinas. The victim bravely addressed the court at today's sentencing hearing. She told the court how Bernal's actions impacted her hardworking family both emotionally and financially. When her family returned home from work and school, their house – for which they had saved for years - was ransacked. The items he stole included her children's piggy banks and irreplaceable photographs of her grandparents, who passed away shortly after the burglary. She told the court how, even today, her children continue to suffer anxiety and fear in their own home.

Bernal's 2016 crime spree continued into the Toro Park neighborhood. On June 11, 2016, he was caught by homeowners breaking into vehicles. When he was subsequently arrested, officers discovered his car was full of stolen property, including a child's Toro Park baseball team hat, a law enforcement badge stolen in a Salinas vehicle burglary, multiple pieces of mail, UPS/Amazon packages, a checkbook, and a Social Security employee badge stolen in another Salinas vehicle burglary earlier that year.

On August 19, 2016, Bernal used a credit card – stolen a few days earlier in yet another vehicle burglary in Salinas - at the Lucky's on South Main. On October 21, 2016, Bernal pulled a knife on a young family who found Bernal breaking into their vehicle at 11:30am at the Nob Hill in Salinas. While fleeing the parking lot, Bernal nearly broadsided an off-duty CHP officer. When he was located and arrested the following week, he had a work ID and personal check of an East Salinas resident in his pockets. Her car had been burglarized – again in broad daylight in a busy parking lot - when her family stopped briefly at a North Salinas Costco to purchase flowers to bring to her father in law's graveyard.

On December 1, 2016, Bernal broke into two cars. First, he brought his young child and used her as a decoy while he broke into a locked vehicle at a downtown shop. He then, as stated by Judge Liu, “parked, waited, and watched” as his next victim left her parked vehicle in another busy parking lot. He emptied her vehicle of thousands of dollars worth of items in a matter of moments.

Bernal’s five open felony cases and three open misdemeanor cases were consolidated into one jury trial which began on January 22, 2018. After five days of testimony from dozens of witnesses, the jury convicted Bernal of all charged offenses. These convictions included Bernal’s third and fourth “strike” offenses. His previous strikes included a 2007 felony evading, committed in furtherance of and for the benefit of a criminal street gang, and a 2010 residential burglary that occurred in the city of Marina.

While sentencing Bernal to eighty-five years to life in prison, Judge Liu noted Bernal’s “unrelenting behavior,” and how he had committed “crime after crime after crime.” Judge Liu told Bernal that “no home or place or vehicle is safe from you.” Judge Liu stated that Bernal had made people feel unsafe in the one place where they should feel safe, and that he had “taken away from their sense of security.”

The victims in this case were supported by Stephanie Escamilla with the District Attorney’s Victim Advocate Unit and especially District Attorney Investigative Aide Adam Sanders.

The Salinas Police Department recovered a large amount of property from Bernal’s residence and is still actively seeking to reunite victims with stolen property. If you were the victim of a residential or vehicle burglary in the Salinas or Toro Park area in 2016, and had items – particularly jewelry - stolen from you that have not been recovered, please contact Detective Byron Gansen at 831-758-7137 or byrong@ci.salinass.ca.us.

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