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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Woodland Gang Members Convicted for Possessing an Assault Weapon

(Woodland, CA) – April 27, 2012 - Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that on April 26, 2012, a Yolo County jury convicted three Norteño gang members from Woodland for possessing a Tec-9 type assault pistol in their car and for engaging in criminal street gang activity. Twenty-year-olds Angel Palacios, Carlos Hernandez and German Martinez were each found guilty by the jury.

Witnesses testified at trial that on August 17, 2010 two groups of gang members were in the area of Harris Park near Midtown Elementary in Woodland. Just as school security arrived, a rival gang member challenged defendant Hernandez, who appeared to have an object in his hand. The police were called and the two groups left before law enforcement arrived. An officer stopped the car occupied by the defendants and a 14-year-old juvenile. In the car was an illegal, AA Arms Luger AP9 assault weapon with a clip containing 23 rounds of 9mm ammunition. According to defendant Palacios, he had purchased the gun and took it in the car that day. Palacios also handed the gun to the juvenile passenger just before being pulled over because he felt the juvenile would get in less trouble than the adults in the car.

A Woodland Police Officer testified that the weapon was designed with both high capacity and cooling features to allow it to fire as many as 35 bullets within a few seconds. A Woodland Police gang expert gave the jury some background on criminal street gangs explaining the many violent crimes committed by the Norteño gang in Woodland and how the gun increases the status of the gang and prepares gang members for the frequent confrontations with their rivals. The Yolo County jury found the defendants guilty for transporting and possessing an illegal firearm. They found Hernandez guilty of being a felon in possession of a gun while on probation. Hernandez has a prior conviction for battery causing great bodily injury and all three men were on probation at the time of the crime.

Deputy District Attorney Ryan Couzens prosecuted the case. “We appreciate the courageous efforts of school security for arriving on scene and avoiding disaster,” stated Couzens. “Had intervention not occurred,” continued Couzens, “the weapon could have been fired in a public park in a crowd of people.” District Attorney Jeff Reisig praised the efforts of the Woodland Police Department for their hard work and expertise in the case. The Honorable Stephen L. Mock who presided over the case will sentence the defendants on May 18, 2012. They each face maximum prison terms between 12 and 21 years.

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