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**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Approved by 

Re: Deferral for Federal prosecution of Accessories to Murder of Newman Police Officer Ronil Singh

On January 2, 2019, the Kern County District Attorney's Office initiated charges under state law against Bernabe Madrigal Castaneda, Maria Louisa Moreno, and Erasmo Villegas. All three defendants were charged with Penal Code Section 32: being an accessory to the murder of Officer Singh by "harboring, concealing, or aiding" the alleged perpetrator of the murder "with the intent that the perpetrator may avoid or escape from arrest, trial, conviction or punishment."

On January 14, 2019, the Kern County District Attorney's Office, in consultation with the United States Attorney and Department of Homeland Security, agreed to defer to Federal prosecution of the three charged accessory defendants. By January 14, Federal agents had secured arrest warrants for all three defendants and were aware of the pending dismissal to ensure that the defendants would be transitioned from state to federal custody to allow a timely federal prosecution. The defendants face a more serious punishment under federal laws than what California's newly revised criminal justice statutes allow. Given the seriousness of the case and the conduct, the Kern County District Attorney's Office has dismissed the state charges to permit Federal prosecution to timely proceed.

Under California law, being an accessory to a felony is punished the same regardless of how serious the underlying felony is. A violation of Penal Code section 32 has a potential punishment no higher than three years. After the criminal justice realignment in California in Assembly Bill 109 in 2011, accessories to any crime – even accessories to murder of a police officer – are no longer eligible to receive state prison sentences – only local jail terms.

For the above noted reasons, the Kern County District Attorney dismissed the current state charges in case BF 175014 ABC to permit federal prosecution to proceed.