



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

FRANCISCO R. ZARATE
Chief Deputy District Attorney

ANTHONY G. KOESTER
Chief Investigator

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 3, 2008

District Attorney Mike Ramsey today announced the filing of felony gang charges in Butte County Superior Court charging four defendants in connection with the shooting outside Marsh Junior High in Chico last Wednesday.

The four defendants include a juvenile who is being charged as an adult. Jose Banuelos, 17, Chico, was charged with the February 27th shooting which took place in the late afternoon near the junior high and nearby residences. Banuelos is accused of shooting a rival gang member in the shoulder. Banuelos was also charged with enhancements of personally firing a semiautomatic firearm, inflicting great bodily injury, and with participating in a criminal street gang. The charges and enhancements carry a maximum penalty of more than 25 years in state prison. Ramsey said he chose to charge the 17-year-old as an adult because of the seriousness of this gang related shooting and Banuelos prior serious juvenile gang record.

Also charged today in connection to the shooting was Juan Luis Chavez, 18, Chico; Leonel Fernando Gutierrez, 19, Paradise; and Raul Ruiz, Jr., 18, Chico. All three were arraigned on a single felony count of active participation in a criminal street gang. If convicted, they could each serve up to three years in prison.

When the four defendants return to court, Ruiz Jr., will also face a violation of probation for a previous misdemeanor gun possession case on which Ruiz Jr. had been sentenced just hours before the shooting. Ruiz Jr. was to turn himself into the Butte County Jail later next month but was instead arrested in connection with the shooting.

Chavez, Gutierrez and Ruiz Jr., are all being held on \$15,000 bail pending the next court appearance. Banuelos is being held on \$150,000 bail. The next court date for the four defendants is March 6, 2008 at 8:35 a.m.

Ramsey said, "We are increasingly concerned about the ready availability of firearms to young men willing to use them with no regard for others or themselves. Local gang activity is becoming increasingly violent. Luckily Chico Police Department was able to make this arrest quickly and end the danger to the public."