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PRESS RELEASE

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GANG MEMBER SENTENCED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

A Hamilton City man was sentenced yesterday for his role in a gang-based drug trafficking organization.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced that Daniel Diaz, 25, was sentenced to the maximum term of seven years in state prison following a plea to possessing methamphetamine for sale with a gang enhancement.

Diaz was arrested in October 2009 by members of the Butte County Interagency Narcotics Task Force. Diaz's arrest was one of a dozen arrests in "Operation Northern Connection," which was a months long investigation by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

The investigation was led by the Butte Interagency Narcotics Task Force and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. The investigation revealed that local members of a criminal street gang were transporting large amounts of methamphetamine into the North Valley. The drug was then distributed to Butte and Glenn County gang members for sales throughout the area.

When officers searched Diaz's home in early October 2009, they found a bullet proof vest, night vision optics, a stolen handgun and an illegal large capacity ammunition magazine.

Butte County Superior Court Judge Kristen Lucena cited multiple reasons for imposing the upper term sentence, including the sophistication of the operation and the defendant's "long-standing" gang affiliation which demonstrated the defendant was "highly entrenched" in the gang.

Ramsey said "the combination of stolen guns, a ballistic vest, night vision goggles, deep gang ties and narcotics traffic is unquestionably a recipe for violence. Removing Mr. Diaz from the community for a substantial period of time is clearly the best thing possible for the safety of the public."