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PRESS RELEASE

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CHICO GANG MEMBER SENTENCED FOR MAJOR DRUG OPERATION

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced today that Joseph Molina, 37, Chico was sentenced to eight years state prison for his role in a gang-based drug trafficking organization.

Molina, a long term gang member of a local criminal street gang, was arrested by Chico Police for possession of two ounces of methamphetamine.

Molina's arrest was one of a dozen arrests in "Operation Northern Connection" last October. The operation 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.

Ramsey said the gang-based operation was moving "multiple pounds" of drugs into the region every month. Ramsey said the investigation demonstrates the "increasing sophistication" of local gangs.

Ramsey said "Operation Northern Connection" allowed law enforcement to significantly disrupt gang-based narcotics' traffic and to remove local gang leaders from the community for substantial periods of time.

The sentence was imposed by Butte County Superior Court Judge Kristen Lucena.