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PRESS RELEASE

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CONTRA COSTA GANG MEMBER MEETS BUTTE COUNTY JUSTICE

A gang member from Contra Costa County made the mistake of coming to Butte County and was sent to state prison yesterday. District Attorney Mike Ramsey said today that Marco Antonio Pena, 28, was sentenced to 9 years, 8 months in prison by Butte County Superior Court Judge Kristen Lucena. Ramsey said Pena had previously been on four separate grants of felony probation out of Contra Costa County when he was stopped in Chico last August, 2010.

On August 7, 2010, detectives from the Chico Police Department gang unit stopped a car carrying Pena and other gang members near the intersection of West 3rd and Walnut in Chico. The detectives' attention was drawn to the car by an excessively loud stereo. Upon contact, a cloud of marijuana smoke emitted from the car. Pena and the others were identified and taken from the car. All were displaying gang colors and Pena had visible gang tattoos. Pursuant to Pena's felony probation status, the car was searched. A loaded .38 caliber handgun was found concealed in an armrest in the car. Pena was arrested for being an ex-felon in possession of a gun.

During the course of his Butte County court proceedings on the gun charge, the Contra Costa Superior Court transferred its cases against Pena to Butte County. Noting that he was an active gang member from the Pittsburg area, the District Attorney's office added gang enhancements to the local gun charge. Pena plead to the local gang-related gun charge in December. Based upon the new felony conviction the Butte Superior Court violated Pena's probation on his previous Contra Costa County convictions. The Contra Costa County convictions included a gang-related felony assault charge as well as other gun and theft charges. The Contra Costa gang related assault was a "strike." The local gun charge with its gang enhancement constitutes another "strike" against Pena. Any future felonious conduct by Pena could be charged under the California "3 Strikes" law and Pena would be exposed to 25 years to life in state prison.

Ramsey praised the Chico Police gang unit for their proactive approach to gang enforcement, noting: "Pena may have gotten away with his gang-banging lifestyle in Contra Costa County, but he made the mistake of coming to Butte County, where violent gang members are definitely not welcome."