

Stanislaus County **SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**

Sheriff Adam Christianson
250 E. Hackett Road, Modesto, CA 95358



MEDIA RELATIONS



**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE 8-6-10
TIME 10:30 pm**

HOMICIDE SUSPECTS IDENTIFIED, STILL AT LARGE

Riverbank, CA - Stanislaus sheriff deputies were dispatched at 12:40 a.m. on August 5th, to investigate the report of an altercation at the am/pm located at the intersection of Highway 108 and Oakdale Road, Riverbank. Deputies were only blocks away when the call was dispatched and when they arrived they located Chaz Bettencourt, 21, suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. Deputies and officers from Modesto PD attempted lifesaving measures until medics arrived and transported Bettencourt to a Modesto area hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Homicide detectives were immediately dispatched to the scene to investigate Bettencourt's murder. Bettencourt had driven to am/pm with a friend shortly after 12:30 a.m. While walking out of the store Bettencourt and his friend were confronted by three suspects. During the altercation Bettencourt was shot multiple times. The suspects fled the area on foot and investigators were left with few details remaining at the scene.

Detectives quickly began pouring over the evidence at the scene and interviewing the few witnesses that were known. "Our detectives worked nearly nonstop," said Lieutenant Mick Hardenbrook, who heads the Sheriff's Department's homicide unit.

Investigators also had access to the am/pm's security surveillance footage. "It's truly disturbing to see how these suspects attacked the victim like a pack of wolves," said Hardenbrook, "it's easy to see how anybody could have fallen victim to these murderers."

After following numerous leads detectives were able to identify two of the three suspects as Turlock Diaz, 14, of Turlock and Daniel Pantoja, 18, of Riverbank.

Based on information obtained by investigators it was determined the incident was not gang related, however, the suspects were gang affiliated. Detectives also had information that there was more than one firearm in possession of the suspects at the time of the murder.

With all the facts that were gathered, detectives were able to complete two search warrants for the homes of the identified suspects as well as the arrest of both Diaz and Pantoja.

Based on the type of crime and the possible presence of armed suspects, the Stanislaus Sheriff's S.W.A.T. team was utilized the search the homes. The residences were located in the 600 #BLK Columbia St, Turlock, and the 3800 #BLK Stanislaus St, Riverbank. The homes were searched at 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., respectively.

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At the conclusion of the searches neither Diaz nor Pantoja were located. Detectives were busy late into the night searching the homes for clues that could connect those suspects to the murder.

The photographs of both Diaz and Pantoja are being released and the Sheriff's Department is asking the public's assistance in locating these suspects. "We're hoping someone out there will help us get these dangerous criminals off of the street," said Hardenbrook. Diaz and Pantoja currently have active warrants for murder; both are to be considered armed and dangerous.

Anyone with information about this case is encouraged to contact Detective McQueary at (209) 525-7099. Callers can also leave an anonymous tip by calling Crime Stoppers at (209) 521-4636. Tipsters can also e-mail tips at <http://www.modestopolice.com/CrimeStoppers>, or text them to CRIMES (274637) by typing "Tip704" plus the message. Tipsters are eligible for a cash reward.

For information regarding this press release please contact Deputy Andrew Winter (209) 652-0300, awinter@stanislaussheriff.com.

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