

# DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
Larry D. Morse II

ASSISTANT DISTRICT  
ATTORNEY  
Joseph M. Tresidder



CHIEF DEPUTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
David Moranda

CHIEF DEPUTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
Harold L. Nutt

2222 "M" STREET, MERCED, CA 95340  
TELEPHONE (AREA CODE 209) 385-7381  
FAX (209) 385-7473

---

March 31, 2008

## JURY CONVICTS MERCED MAN FOR THREATENING CRIME VICTIM

A Merced County jury convicted Merced resident Mario Flores Benitez, 26, of maliciously dissuading a victim from reporting a crime and giving police a false name. The jury also found true an enhancement alleging that Benitez personally used a deadly weapon in committing the offense. Following the jury's verdict, Benitez admitted that he has served two separate prior prison terms.

On December 20, 2007 Benitez and several associates went to a bar in Los Banos. The defendant's sister, Nancy Benitez, vandalized a car and broke the windshield of a taxi. When the taxi driver stated he was going to call the police, Benitez displayed a knife and threatened to harm him if the crime was reported.

Deputy District Attorney Kimberly Madayag, who prosecuted the case, credited swift police work and the bravery of the taxi driver in reporting the crime for obtaining the conviction. "He showed great bravery in not only reporting the crime after being threatened, but in coming to court and testifying against the man that threatened him with a knife. His bravery is admirable and I wish more citizens had the courage to do what he did. I am thankful that the jury delivered a fair and just verdict that validates what the victim was put through and encourages other crime victims to come forward," said Madayag.

Based upon the new conviction, the Honorable Alfonso Rodriguez of Fresno, who presided over the case, also found Benitez had violated the terms of his felony probation in another case. Benitez faces up to 10 years in prison when he is sentenced on April 24.

Officer Eduardo Solis of the Los Banos Police Department and investigators from the Merced County District Attorney's Office investigated the case. Nancy Benitez remains at large and has an active warrant for her arrest. Anyone with information regarding her whereabouts is encouraged to contact any law enforcement agency.