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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Parole Denied Convicted Armed Robber Juanita Donaldson

CDC #W90144; Kern County Court Case #BF094518A and Los Angeles County Court Case #LA037984

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced that the California Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) denied release to convicted armed robber Juanita Donaldson. On January 30, 2025, BPH found that Donaldson continues to pose a current and unreasonable risk to public safety. Representing the District Attorney's Office was Deputy District Attorney Gina Nargie.

On March 5, 2001, Donaldson and two other co-defendants committed an armed robbery at the Office Depot on Arrow Street in Bakersfield, California. At approximately 7:00am, they entered the business armed and demanded money. Donaldson, armed with a black revolver, held customers at gun point.

Law enforcement responded and found the robbers fleeing. During a high-speed chase, the robbers drove up to 75mph, ran a stoplight and fired upon the pursuing officers. Ultimately, the robbers were stopped at a shopping mall parking lot on Ming Ave where law enforcement and the robbers engaged in a shootout. As a result of this incident, Donaldson sustained a gunshot wound to her abdomen, but two of her co-defendants died. Three handguns were located inside of the vehicle.

Further investigation revealed that Donaldson had committed a similar armed robbery in Los Angeles County. On February 1, 2001, Donaldson and her co-defendants entered the Office Depot in Woodland Hills, California at approximately 7:00am. In this robbery, Donaldson held the customers at the front of the store, prone at gunpoint.

On April 5, 2001, in Kern County, Donaldson pled guilty to robbery and personal use of a firearm. On May 3, 2001, a Kern County Judge sentenced Donaldson to 15 years state prison.

On September 4, 2001, a Los Angeles County Judge sentenced Donaldson to 10 years state prison for robbery, attempted robbery, three counts of assault with a firearm on person, personal use of a firearm, and principal armed with firearm. The judge ordered that Donaldson's sentence be served consecutively to her sentence in Kern County for a total of 25 years.

Donaldson, age 44, has served approximately 23 years in state prison. She is being considered for early release pursuant to Youthful Offender laws because she committed her crimes while under the age of 26. However, since Donaldson’s admission into state prison, she has incurred approximately 73 rules violations and 96 counseling write-ups. Donaldson’s most recent rules violation involving physical violence was in 2023 for battery on a prisoner.

Donaldson has been rated by psychologist since 2018 in three separate evaluations as “High Risk” for re-offense. Her last “High Risk” rating was in 2023. In addition, despite not being eligible for parole until February of 2026, Donaldson no longer remains incarcerated in state prison. Rather, Donaldson is housed at a reentry facility in the community in California.

On January 30, 2025, the BPH conducted Donaldson’s third and last parole hearing. The commissioners outlined Donaldson’s institutional behavior, repeated refusals to work, propensity for violence, substance abuse history, lack of parole and relapse prevention plans, lack of programming and lack of educational upgrades. The Kern County District Attorney’s Office asked the BPH to deny parole. The BPH found that Donaldson was not suitable for parole and posed a current unreasonable risk of danger to society. The BPH has the option of denying an inmate parole for a period of 15, 10, 7, 5 or 3 years. Donaldson’s commissioners issued a three-year denial. Donaldson will likely remain in the community in a reentry program until her parole date in February 2026.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; “Donaldson's long history of dangerous behavior—both in and out of prison—makes her a clear threat to public safety. My office has fought at every parole hearing to ensure she remains incarcerated because accountability cannot be rushed, and early release is not an option for those who continue to pose a risk.”

Juanita Donaldson:

