



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

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**TULARE MAN SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR CARJACKING,
KIDNAPPING, AND ATTEMPTED RAPE**

Today in Department 10 of the Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Judge Kathryn Montejano sentenced Miguel Michael Rodriguez, age 33, of Tulare, to 193 years to life in prison for numerous violent crimes. On August 11, 2017, Rodriguez was found guilty of sexual penetration with a foreign object, two counts of forcible oral copulation, kidnapping to commit a sex offense, kidnapping, two counts of kidnapping during a carjacking, second-degree robbery, two counts of assault with intent to commit a forced sex offense, two counts of attempted forcible rape, and two counts of criminal threats. All counts are violent or serious felonies.

The jury also found true special allegations that three of the crimes were done in the commission of aggravated kidnapping. In separate court trial, Judge Montejano found true that Rodriguez suffered a prior strike offense for carjacking with a weapon in 2006.

In the late evening of June 2, 2015, a male and female couple were dining at a Tulare fast food restaurant when Rodriguez sat in the booth beside them. After a conversation between the two, leftover food was offered to Rodriguez, which he declined. The couple then left.

The couple were in their car when Rodriguez approached stating he had a gun, and told them to unlock the doors which they did out of fear. Rodriguez got in the vehicle and told them to drive. Rodriguez took the boyfriend's cell phone and told him to get in the trunk. Rodriguez then attempted to sexually assault the girlfriend. During the assault, the boyfriend used the escape mechanism in the trunk and attempted to free his companion, however, Rodriguez drove off with her before she could be rescued. Rodriguez took her to secluded areas and continued the sexual assaults. Once notified, law enforcement was able to locate the vehicle using cell phone pings and the "find my iPhone" app on the cell phone taken from the boyfriend. Rodriguez was taken into custody by Tulare County Sheriff deputies. The victim escaped prior to law enforcement's arrival and had been hiding in a tree.

"The terror this defendant put in to his victims is unimaginable," said District Attorney Tim Ward. "I commend law enforcement for their quick thinking that led them to the defendant and District Attorney staff who worked hard to make sure he spends the rest of his life in prison."

The case was prosecuted by Supervising Deputy District Attorney Cindy Underwood and was investigated by the Tulare Police Department and the Tulare County Sheriff's Office.

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