



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEWS RELEASE

RE: Cause No.: 06-CR-2542-A
State of Texas v. Ernesto Berlanga – D. O. B. 11/07/1979

Brownsville Man sentenced to 25 years in prison for Aggravated Assault

Brownsville, Texas – February 18, 2011 – Armando R. Villalobos, County and District Attorney for Cameron County, announces that Ernesto Berlanga, 31, of Brownsville, Texas, was sentenced this week to 25 years in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Institutional Division for aggravated assault.

Assistant County and District Attorneys Oscar Guzman and Jonathan Gracia represented the State of Texas and presented evidence and arguments to a jury in the 107th Judicial District Court during a three day trial.

The jury found Berlanga guilty of aggravated assault and was sentenced to 25 years in prison by State District Judge Benjamin Euresti Jr.

On July 15, 2006, Berlanga and five other inmates assaulted Ruben Villanueva, an inmate incarcerated at the Carrizalez-Rucker Detention Center. Berlanga and the other co-defendants, who assaulted Villanueva, are all members of the Valluco Prison Syndicate Gang.

Villanueva was stabbed in the eye with a pencil from the defendant and hit over the head with a coffee cup. He was also punched, kicked and spat upon for some 15 minutes before jail officials were able to respond to see what was happening.

“When a crime in Cameron County is committed, no matter where it takes place, the Cameron County and District Attorney’s Office will be there to prosecute and hold those responsible accountable for their actions,” Chief First Assistant District Attorney Charles E. Mattingly Jr. said.

“This jury should be commended for its efforts and its verdict in this case.”

Berlanga is awaiting trial on murder charges also in the 107th Judicial District Court. His next court appearance is on April 21 for a status hearing. He is accused of murdering

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Patricia Sandra Salas, 40, of Brownsville, Texas, in August 2005. He faces up to life in prison.

For more information, contact the Cameron County and District Attorney's Office at (956) 544-0849.

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