

Commonwealth's Attorney
Colin D. Stolle

Chief Deputies
Susan G. Hooks
Scott M. Lang

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY
CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

Deputies
Wendy Alexander
Tabitha B. Anderson
Sara R. Chandler
Patrick J. Connolly
Janee D. Joslin
David W. Laird
Paul J. Powers

2425 Nimmo Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-9050

(757) 385-4401
FAX (757) 385-1288
TDD: 711
www.vbgov.com/oca

**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Macie Allen (757) 385-8545
mpallen@vbgov.com

**Commonwealth v. Melvin Edgardo Molina-Ramos
Jury Convicts MS-13 Member for Ordering the Murder of Young Man**

Virginia Beach, Va. – Colin D. Stolle, Commonwealth's Attorney for the city of Virginia Beach, announced today that Melvin Edgardo Molina-Ramos, age 24, was found guilty by a jury for charges of Solicitation to Commit Murder, Conspiracy to Commit Murder, Participate in Criminal Act for Benefit of Gang, Accessory After the Fact to Homicide. Circuit Court Judge James C. Lewis, who presided over the 3-day jury trial, will sentence Molina-Ramos on February 23, 2022.

The Commonwealth's evidence proved that on July 6, 2018, two men were kayaking on Lake Smith around 10 a.m. when they observed an unresponsive male slumped over in a wooded area of the shoreline. They called police, who arrived on scene along with the medical examiner and determined the male to be deceased with a gunshot wound to the back of the head. There was no weapon found at the scene and the victim did not have identification. He was later identified as Jairo Guardado.

An extensive investigation including video surveillance, cell phone data, and witness interviews ultimately indicated that the murder was related to MS-13 gang activity. MS-13 is a transnational criminal street gang with international membership. Melvin Edgardo Molina-Ramos and four (4) fellow MS-13 gang members were involved in the murder of Guardado because they believed he was involved with a rival gang. Molina-Ramos, the most senior member of MS-13 out of the five (5) co-defendants, ordered Guardado's murder. As a part of their MS-13 gang membership, the three (3) co-defendants at the scene of the homicide killed Guardado and were threatened with death by Molina-Ramos if they failed or if they spoke of the homicide. Molina-Ramos solicited and conspired in the murder and provided assistance to the three (3) co-defendants after the murder was completed. Three co-defendants have trials pending in Virginia Beach Circuit Court.

The Virginia Beach Police Department Homicide Unit, Norfolk Police Department Detective Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation Tidewater Violent Crimes Task Force, Federal Bureau of Investigation Norfolk Field Office, and Fairfax County Police Department Gang Investigations Unit assisted with the investigation and prosecution of this case.

Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Tabitha B. Anderson and Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney James S. Panagis prosecuted this case. Please contact Macie Allen if additional information is desired.

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