

Calif. torture suspects plead not guilty

by UPI

STOCKTON, Calif. -- A California grand jury indicted four people accused of torturing a 16-year-old boy for a year before he escaped wearing underwear and an ankle shackle.

Kelly Layne Lau, Caren Ramirez and Anthony Vincent Waiters pleaded not guilty to the accusations outlined in the 17-count indictment, which included charges of assault with caustic chemicals.

Michael Luther Schumacher, Lau's husband, postponed his plea until his lawyer reviewed witness transcripts from the grand jury investigation.

Lau and Schumacher were held on \$2.26 million bail, while Ramirez and Waiters were held without bail, a jail official told CNN.

All four suspects were indicted on torture, false imprisonment, criminal threats and multiple counts of aggravated mayhem and corporal injury to a child, court documents state.

The suspects are also accused of using a bat and belt, and throwing "vitriol, corrosive acid, flammable substance and caustic chemicals" on the boy "with the intent to injure the flesh and disfigure (his) body," the indictment reads.

If convicted, they could spend the rest of their lives in prison, the San Jose Mercury News said.

Authorities say the teen, identified as "Kyle R" in court records, was chained to a fireplace, where he was also forced to sleep, in Lau and Schumacher's home in Tracy, Calif., about 65 miles east of San Francisco for most of 2008.

He managed to escape Dec. 1 and stumbled into a fitness center, emaciated, filthy, bloody and bruised, wearing only boxer shorts, police said. He had a 3-foot-long chain shackled to his ankle and begged for help, the Mercury News said.

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