

Plumber faces trial in reptile, gun case

by Ray Huard - CNS

SAN DIEGO, Calif. - An El Cajon plumber who had a garage full of guns and deadly snakes, and an alligator in his living room, must stand trial on a variety of weapons and animal charges, a judge ruled Thursday. Christopher Shawn Hendry Jr. had 27 poisonous snakes in his garage, including two cobras and four rattlesnakes, which police happened upon while investigating what at first seemed like a routine domestic violence case, officers testified.

Possession of the alligator and all but two of the snakes violated state fish and game laws, Deputy District Attorney Jessica Schuster said.

Two of the rattlesnakes were legal because under El Cajon city ordinances, residents can own up to two native rattlesnakes, Schuster said.

Hendry, 24, also is charged with possessing an illegal assault-style rifle and an illegally modified handgun, which had a threaded barrel with either a silencer or flash suppressor attached, Schuster said.

El Cajon Superior Court Judge Herbert J. Exarhos allowed Hendry to remain free on \$50,000 bail pending trial Nov. 19.

If convicted of all charges, Hendry faces a maximum penalty of nine years in prison on the gun charges and up to three months in jail for each of the reptile charges, Schuster said. He also could face up to a year in jail on a vandalism charge, related to the domestic violence case. She said it's unlikely that the punishment would be that severe.

Police discovered the guns and reptiles after being called to a home in El Cajon sometime before 1 a.m. June 26, where Hendry had smashed a window after seeing his fiancée at a party with another man, El Cajon police Officer Kevin Reiley testified.

The homeowner told police he was worried because Hendry owned guns, Reiley testified. Hendry told police that he kept guns in a safe in the garage of his home on Hardin Drive and had a handgun under the mattress in his bedroom.

Police found the snakes in glass enclosures in a room in Hendry's garage and a 3-foot alligator in an aquarium in the living room, Reiley said. He said they also found a pistol under a mattress in the master

bedroom, ammunition and gun magazines in a child's bedroom and ammunition and fireworks in a third bedroom.

The safe had been moved to the Markerry Avenue home of Hendry's relatives, Reiley said. Searching that house, police found 12 rifles and five handguns inside the safe, including the one with the silencer, Schuster said. They also found four rifles in a bedroom inside the Markerry Avenue home, Reiley testified.

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