



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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CHICO MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER OF MAN FOUND IN SHOPPING CART

A Chico man, already charged last week with the attempted strangulation murder of a female acquaintance, will be in Butte County Superior Court today to face new murder charges involving the body found in a shopping cart just outside a Chico food supermarket on Sunday afternoon, March 12, 2023.

Timothy Wayne Wiechert, 48, Chico, is to be arraigned this afternoon for the murder of Daniel Niles, 61, Chico, after having been arraigned last week for the attempted murder of a 28-year-old woman acquaintance on Sunday morning, March 12, 2023.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the cases are related in that the suspect, victim, and woman were homeless together in the area of the FoodMaxx market on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway in Chico. It was Wiechert's arrest for his attempted murder of the woman that led to the murder charge for Niles, Ramsey said.

Late Sunday morning, March 12, 2023, at approximately 11:27 a.m. Chico Police were called to an address on Chandese Lane in Chico, where a resident reported she had come home to a strange truck parked in her driveway and a male, later identified as Wiechert, had a young woman down on the ground and was strangling her. The resident also reported a neighbor had come over and was attempting to get the man off the young woman by hitting him with a baseball bat, but with little success.

Ramsey said when officers arrived they saw Wiechert still strangling the 28-year-old Chico woman, who was turning blue, and the good Samaritan neighbor still trying to stop Wiechert with a bat. The officers were able to physically restrain Wiechert and save the 28-year-old woman, who was taken to Enloe Hospital by ambulance. Wiechert was also taken to Enloe for treatment of a broken shoulder blade before being booked into Butte County Jail.

After Wiechert was arrested, officers noted that the truck in the driveway was registered to Daniel Niles. A quick search of the camper shell in the back of the truck revealed a good deal of blood and the truck was taken into custody for further forensic processing. A dog, a Labrador-mix named "Tank" belonging to Niles, was also found in the truck and taken to the city pound. A search for Niles was commenced.

Later that same afternoon across town, at approximately 4:30 p.m., at the FoodMaxx grocery store, a security guard employed by the complex of stores in the area, noted a shopping cart with a large item wrapped in a white tarp in the cart just a few feet from the FoodMaxx front entrance. The guard looked inside the tarp, saw a body, and called 911. Chico firefighters arrived first and removed the body, later identified as Daniel Niles, from the cart's basket. It became immediately clear that Niles had been deceased for some time, having suffered several traumatic blunt-force head wounds.

Chico police detectives arrived and were told by store employees the shopping cart and its wrapped contents had been there for a few days. Detectives asked for the store's video surveillance to see who or how the cart and its contents had been brought to the store. The store's corporate offices refused to share the videos with officers.

However, a search warrant for the store videos was obtained by the detectives and the District Attorney's Office through a local judge. A later review of the videos revealed a man matching Wiechert's description, including clothing and tattoos, rolling the cart with the white-tarped large object onboard into the FoodMaxx store at approximately 6:19 a.m. on Friday, March 10. Niles' dog "Tank" could be also seen in the video following the cart.

The cart was rolled to an area near the store's bathrooms and abandoned by the man, who took the dog outside. A store employee was seen on video later that morning rolling the cart and its same contents out the door of the store where it was placed a few feet from the front entrance and remained undisturbed for the next two days – only being moved once to clear the way for a wheel-chair bound customer to come into the store.

On Wednesday, March 15, the Butte County District Attorney filed an attempted murder charge against Wiechert based on the strangulation of the 28-year-old woman. In addition, the Butte County Probation Department filed a violation of probation petition against Wiechert, for cutting off his ankle monitor last month and absconding from a previously granted probation for a felony arson conviction.

At a further arraignment on the attempted murder charge on Thursday, March 16, Wiechert's public defender told the presiding judge there was a doubt about Wiechert's competency to stand trial. The judge then suspended criminal proceedings pending a psychologist's report on Wiechert's ability to stand trial, which is due on April 20, 2023.

Ramsey said Wiechert is scheduled to be arraigned on the new murder charge at 3:00 p.m. today, but he expected the proceedings will most likely be suspended to determine Wiechert's competency to stand trial.

Ramsey noted the 28-year-old woman was kept in Enloe Hospital for three days, but then released as her condition improved. Tank was recovered from the pound by Niles' adult son.

If convicted of both the murder and attempted murder, Wiechert could be sentenced to two (2) life terms.



Timothy Wayne Wiechert