



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Paradise Felon Pleads to Theft and Multiple Firearms Charges

A 44-year-old Paradise man who previously worked for PG&E was sentenced to over nine years in prison this afternoon on his pleas to two charges related to felony thefts from PG&E as well as six firearm-related felonies. Included in the firearm pleas were charges for manufacturing a fully-automatic machinegun, manufacturing an assault weapon, and possession of more than 32,000 rounds of ammunition.

**David Alexander Elkinton, 44, of Paradise,** appeared in Butte County Superior Court today and was denied probation and sentenced to a total of nine years and four months in state prison for his crimes. He was also ordered to pay over \$60,000 in restitution to PG&E.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Elkinton was initially arrested in December 2022, when he was caught stealing a PG&E forklift from a work yard in Paradise. Although he offered to give the arresting officer a couple of motorcycles in exchange for releasing him, Elkinton was arrested and later bailed out of jail on the vehicle theft charge.

As Elkinton was out on \$15,000 bail, a second series of thefts from another PG&E work yard in Paradise was discovered in January 2023. Elkinton was a suspect and surveillance footage tied him to those thefts where tens of thousands of dollars of equipment and copper wire was stolen.

GPS tracking of a PG&E vehicle stolen and used in the January 2023 thefts led the Paradise Police Department to Elkinton's property in Paradise and the discovery of a butane honey oil (BHO) lab and tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition. Elkinton's criminal history revealed he was a felon and therefore prohibited from possessing ammunition.

Ramsey said this started a series of five search warrants by the Paradise Police Department investigators, who found and seized two BHO labs, methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, a pipe bomb, 25 pounds of explosive powder, and enough firearm parts and ammunition "to arm a militia".

Paradise investigators also found three un-serialized and completed "ghost" guns, along with a bomb-making manual. Of note, these weapons were all homemade firearms, allegedly built by Elkinton in his garage where firearms manufacturing equipment was located.

In total, the Paradise investigators seized over 32,000 rounds of ammunition in over a dozen

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different calibers and thousands of gun parts sufficient to easily construct at least a hundred complete rifles and pistols, plus a half-dozen silencers.

Evidence was located in Elkinton's cell phone that suggested Elkinton had been constructing firearms and selling them for thousands of dollars.

Ramsey said that Elkinton's attorney argued that Elkinton was suffering from PTSD as a result of the Tubbs Fire, Camp Fire, and Bear Fire; and that he should be granted a chance at probation due to his self-claimed heroic actions during those fires. Prosecutors argued it made no sense that having trauma related to the fires would lead a person to possess multiple drugs for sale; steal thousands of dollars of PG&E materials, which would ultimately increase costs for other PG&E customers; cause a felon to possess thousands of firearm parts and ammunition, silencers and a pipe bomb; and manufacture and sell fully automatic ghost guns.

Prosecutors ultimately argued for the maximum sentence of 14 years in prison based on the wide variety of crimes Elkinton committed. Prosecutors also argued it was an insult to Camp Fire survivors to try to blame their shared PTSD for his crimes and it was a sign Elkinton was not really remorseful for his actions, but only remorseful that he was caught.

Judge Michael Deems sentenced Elkinton to a middle-term sentence of 12 years, stating that the aggravating factors did not outweigh the mitigating factors in this case. Additionally, the judge sentenced Elkinton to concurrent prison time for the three charges of felon in possession of ammunition as well as the grand theft from PG&E to which Elkinton had pleaded, further reducing the sentence from 12 years down to 9 years and 4 months. A restitution amount of \$60,607.64 was also ordered to PG&E.

Ramsey said Elkinton's prison sentence was the only way to protect Butte County from the thefts as well as the guns and drugs Elkinton was spreading throughout the community. However, the reduction of Elkinton's sentence by the judge was disappointing given the scope and breadth of Elkinton's crimes proven to have been committed.



David Alexander Elkinton