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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 5, 2023

Chico Man Sent to Prison for Shooting into Downstairs Neighbor's Apartment

A 28-year-old Chico man was sentenced in Butte County Superior Court this afternoon to five years in state prison for his December 2022 shooting into his downstairs neighbor's apartment through her ceiling and door.

Luke Sequoia Kitchel, 28, of Chico, had previously pleaded guilty to firing his shotgun into the apartment below his own on Forest Avenue near Amanda Way in Chico. The Chico Police Department was notified by his downstairs neighbor that she heard a loud noise and found a hole in the ceiling of her bedroom. The victim then went to her front door where she heard another boom and was struck by shotgun pellets fired through her front door. Evidence of a third shot striking below the victim's front window was later located as well. Luckily, all of the shots consisted of "bird shot" pellets and did not cause any substantial injuries.

Chico Police immediately responded, trapping Kitchel in his upstairs apartment, which led to a tense four-and-a-half-hour standoff. Kitchel eventually surrendered to the Chico Police SWAT team.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said a search of the defendant's apartment located the shotgun in question, two additional handguns, live ammunition, spent shotgun shells, and the hole from the defendant's floor through the victim's ceiling. Ramsey said there were no known disputes between the victim and Kitchel.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said at today's sentencing hearing, Kitchel's attorney asked Judge Jesus Rodriguez to sentence Kitchel to probation with credit for the time he had served since the December 26, 2022 incident. The judge acknowledged that Kitchel had no previous criminal record and had a recent drug and mental health history.

However, the judge pointed to the prosecution evidence that neighbors had observed Kitchel wearing a bullet-proof vest shortly after the shooting. The judge agreed with the prosecution's argument that the scenario presented was that of an active mass shooter rather than a sudden mental break from reality. As a result, the judge said public safety demanded a prison sentence and would allow the victim some respite from the fear she continued to feel over the last few months.



Luke Kitchel



Victim's Apartment Door