



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### CHICO MAN CHARGED IN STRING OF ROBBERIES

A Chico man was arraigned in Butte County Superior Court this afternoon on charges of committing a string of nine gas and liquor market robberies on the west side of Chico over the last three weeks. Robert Allen Studdard, III, age 23, was charged by the Butte County District Attorney's Office today with nine counts of second-degree robbery and one count of resisting police.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Studdard was arrested almost immediately after his last robbery on New Year's Eve around 9:50 a.m. by Chico Police officers, who had been dispatched by an alert CPD 911 dispatch operator. Ramsey said the operator had her suspicions aroused after an anonymous cellphone caller reported a "man with a gun" at a Chico market on Mangrove Avenue. Suspecting a ruse to draw police resources away from an impending west side robbery, the dispatcher sent additional officers to a west Chico gas station market that Studdard had robbed before. Studdard was captured as he was running from a robbery committed moments before at that market.

Ramsey said the investigation of Studdard's string of robberies started in late December when Chico Police responded to a report of an armed robbery that had just occurred at a west Chico gas station. While investigating that robbery, the clerk told police that someone believed to be the same individual had robbed the station several days earlier, but no one had called 911. Police were able to determine through surveillance cameras that the suspect appeared to be the same person in both robberies. Over the next few days, several more businesses were robbed by what appeared to be the same person. Recognizing the pattern and the danger to the community, Chico Police immediately tasked its Violence Suppression Unit (VSU) with catching the robber.

Ramsey said over the Christmas weekend, investigators from several different agencies worked together to try to locate the suspect and stop the string of dangerous crimes. Ramsey said that detectives were able to identify Studdard as the likely suspect after viewing surveillance from the different businesses that had been victimized. While the robber wore a mask and gloves in an attempt to hide his identity, Ramsey said investigators were able to identify several unique physical characteristics such as tattoos on the robber that led them to suspect Studdard. As the investigation progressed, Ramsey said a clear pattern emerged of how Studdard committed the robberies. In each case, he carried what appeared to be a black pistol and a distinctive backpack. Studdard would enter the business, approach the clerk, and would then force them to empty the

register. Studdard would then flee on a bicycle.

At the peak of his criminal spree, Ramsey said Studdard robbed multiple businesses within a 24-hour period. One particular gas station in Chico was robbed on four separate occasions within a period of several days. Once police identified Studdard as the prime suspect, Chico detectives were able to focus their efforts on areas Studdard was known to frequent, but were initially unable to locate him as he was transient and moved around the city frequently.

Ramsey said when officers found Studdard running from his last gas station robbery, they ordered him to stop but he continued running, discarding items of clothing in an attempt to change his appearance. Officers quickly found and arrested Studdard at gunpoint. On Studdard's person, they found a large amount of money he had just stolen from the gas station, as well as a realistic-looking replica firearm in his pocket. Studdard was also wearing some of the same clothing from other robberies. A search warrant at Studdard's tent in the area of 9<sup>th</sup> and Hazel revealed other clothing captured on surveillance tapes during those robberies, as well as stolen property, including serialized lottery tickets, traced back to several of the robberies.

At the arraignment today, Superior Court Judge Lucena ordered Studdard held without bail, citing the danger to the community. The judge continued the case to Thursday for further arraignment. Ramsey said Studdard faces up to 13 years in state prison.