



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

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CAREER PORTERVILLE CRIMINAL SENTENCED TO 14 YEARS IN PRISON FOR MULTIPLE FELONIES, POLICE EVASIONS

Today in Department 17 of the Tulare County Superior Court, South County Justice Center, Judge Michael Sheltzer sentenced Michael Anthony Chavez, age 40, to 14 years in prison for multiple felonies and a string of dangerous and life endangering evasions of law enforcement.

In a consolidation of four separate cases, Chavez pleaded no contest to residential first degree burglary, resisting an executive peace officer, two counts of evading peace officers, hit and run, two counts of felon in possession of a firearm, two counts of felon in possession of ammunition, drug sales, auto theft, and identity theft. Chavez also admitted to serving three previous terms in prison.

The crimes in these cases spanned from September 2016 to April 2018.

On September 26, 2016, Chavez was contacted during a parole search and found in possession of a stolen gold Jeep Cherokee and a loaded firearm. On February 25, 2017, Chavez was stopped while driving in the city of Porterville. A parole search was conducted and officers located a loaded firearm, 125 grams of narcotics, several calibers of ammunition, and several pieces of stolen mail.

In early April 2018, Chavez was placed on the Tulare County Sheriff's Office Top 10 Most Wanted list for failing to appear in court after being released on bail. On April 16, 2018, Chavez committed a residential burglary in Porterville and stole a gray Jeep Grand Cherokee from the garage, along with other numerous items.

In the morning of April 23, 2018, Chavez was spotted in the gray stolen Jeep Grand Cherokee by Porterville Police Department officers on Main and Putnam. Officers pursued the speeding Chavez, but terminated the pursuit in the interest of public safety. Four days later on April 27, officers tracked Chavez to an apartment complex where they attempted a traffic stop. Chavez again fled in the Jeep, reaching speeds of 120 mph in the city. Officers terminated the pursuit for safety.

Shy of a week later on May 2, officers again tracked Chavez to a residence where they saw him get into a Cadillac Eldorado. After another attempted traffic stop, Chavez fled through residential Porterville blowing through stop signs and swerving between vehicles. Chavez successfully evaded officers by driving into orchards in the area of Road 224 and Ave 188. Officers later found the Cadillac dumped at a farm on Road 208. The next day on May 3, officers received a tip that Chavez was at a mini mart in a white Toyota Solara. When officers blocked the front of the vehicle, Chavez, who was in the back seat, shouted at the driver to “go, go, go.” Chavez then forced the driver out of the car, took control, and fled. Chavez again led a pursuit through the city reaching speeds of 85 mph, blowing through stop signs, and crossing lanes. At one point, Chavez came within an estimated 12 inches from hitting an oncoming police vehicle on Westfield. Officers terminated the pursuit but continued to trail and watch Chavez, who eventually collided with a GMC truck on Scenic Drive, resulting in injury to the driver. Chavez fled on foot, but was arrested on May 18, 2018, after hiding out in Merced.

Chavez’s pleas in these cases constitute a total of 29 felony convictions from 16 separately filed felony cases since 2001. Convictions range from possession of illegal weapons and ammunition, evasion, and theft. In addition to his felony record, Chavez possesses 16 misdemeanor convictions for being under the influence of a controlled substance, resisting peace officers, possession of illegal weapons, possession of stolen property, and violence towards a police dog.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Jessica Weatherly of the Porterville Division and was investigated by the Porterville Police Department and the Tulare County Sheriff’s Office.

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