



**ERIK NASARENKO**  
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
**NEWS RELEASE**



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## Santa Paula Man Convicted of 12 Felonies for Gun & Ammo Possession

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Refugio Cortez (DOB 07/18/86), of Santa Paula, was convicted by a jury on July 17, 2024, of a dozen felony counts of unlawful possession of guns and ammunition. The convictions included 11 felony counts of owning, possessing, or controlling a firearm by a felon and one felony count of being a person prohibited from possessing ammunition. He was found not guilty of one misdemeanor count of identity theft.

On December 28, 2023, detectives with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office served a search warrant at his mother's residence in Santa Paula, where Cortez kept items in a shed. Detectives located a locked shed in the backyard, which was secured with a combination lock. After gaining entry, detectives found 12 firearms: six rifles including an AK-47 rifle, three revolvers, and three additional handguns. Detectives also located several rounds of various ammunition. Cortez has a felony conviction from 2015 for driving under the influence with a prior felony conviction, which prohibits him from possessing firearms.

Deputy District Attorney Hyla Schneir, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office General Trials Unit, prosecuted the case.

"The proactive investigation by the Sheriff's Office West County Special Enforcement Unit removed the firearms and ammunition from Cortez's shed, and the jury verdicts affirmed his unlawful possession of these items," Ms. Schneir said. "Our community is safer without these firearms and ammunition in Cortez's possession."

Cortez is scheduled to be sentenced on September 4, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 25 of the Ventura County Superior Court. He remains in custody without bail.

**Case: 2023034354**

**Defendant Information:**

Refugio Cortez (DOB 07/18/86)  
Santa Paula

**Charges convicted of:**

- (11 counts) PC 29800(a)(1) – Own/possess/control firearm by felon or addict
- PC 30305(a)(1) – Person prohibited from possessing a firearm possess ammunition

**Special Allegations:**

- CRC 4.421(b)(5) – Defendant's prior performance on probation or parole was unsatisfactory
- CRC 4.421(b)(3) – The defendant has served a prior term in prison and/or county jail

