

UPDATED: Redding CHP officer investigated in child-porn case

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Originally published 01:01 p.m., March 5, 2012

Updated 05:17 p.m., March 5, 2012

A California Highway Patrol officer who turned himself in Friday on explosives, weapons and other charges, also is under investigation in a case that involves child pornography.

Last week, the CHP investigators who searched Gerald Roland Harris' Anderson-area home filed a list of what they seized and an affidavit detailing their investigation in Shasta County Superior Court.

The warrant is sealed, and the documents are hidden in a taped envelope. But the file sheet reveals the warrant was sealed because of "an ongoing investigation involving child pornography." The revelation was first reported today on Redding.com.

The warrant's file number corresponds with a CHP report filed with Harris' criminal complaint. Two independent sources with knowledge of the investigation also have confirmed Harris is under investigation for child pornography, though the extent of the investigation remains unclear. Harris hasn't been charged with any child pornography allegations.

CHP Capt. Todd Morrison, who heads the criminal investigation into the case, has said investigators served the search warrant at Harris' home based on an earlier crime that occurred at the CHP's Redding office on Cascade Boulevard.

A police report with Harris' criminal case doesn't identify the crime, but it says Harris, 45, is "considered the prime suspect."

Morrison declined today to comment on the child pornography. He also wouldn't say whether Harris' second home in South Lake Tahoe had been searched.

A secretary for Harris' Redding attorney, Joe Gazzigli, said he wouldn't comment on the case.

More than 75 guns

A police report accompanying Harris' criminal case says the internal investigation began on Jan. 23. When investigators determined a crime had occurred, they "removed Officer Harris of his peace officer powers." He remained on the CHP's payroll.

Harris' patrol captain, Jerry Flavin, has said Harris was on "administrative work status," but declined to say what that means.

On Feb. 21, Flavin called Harris into his office after Harris arrived at work to "discuss his administrative work status," CHP investigator Steve Rauch wrote in the report filed with court documents.

Capt. Morrison arrived next to tell Harris investigators had a warrant to search him, his work locker and his personal SUV, the report says. Morrison told him they also would be searching his home that day. They gave him the opportunity provide the combination to any safes in his home to keep officers from damaging them. Rauch said Harris agreed to give his combinations and showed them which key on his key ring would open the front door.

Rauch said when officers entered the home, they found several rifles, shotguns and pistols that were "openly staged" throughout what Rauch and other investigators described as a "messy" and cluttered home.

"I observed a plethora of weapons — rifle and shotguns in the corners of doorways, pistols on night stand and atop piece of furniture," wrote investigator Scott Frederick. "... I was surprised by the volume of weapons present."

Many of the guns were loaded, Rauch said.

During the search, investigators found a clear vial containing seven white pills, which they later determined to be methadone, in a paper bag in the kitchen, Rauch said.

Inside the bag was a "CHP Physical Methods of Arrest" training DVD, a switchblade knife and miscellaneous CHP paperwork, Rauch wrote.

The counter "was stacked and covered with CHP-work related items," so many that one investigator wrote it appeared "Harris had cleared out his storage locker(s) at work and transferred the items to his kitchen counter."

Included in the items were a set of metal throwing stars and a switchblade knife, Rauch wrote.

In the kitchen, investigators also found several people's drivers licenses and ID cards from various states, Rauch wrote.

"Dozens and dozens" of other drivers' licenses were found during the search,

prosecutors have said.

Inside Harris' duty bag, officers found several California license plate registration tabs still in their original sealed plastic bags.

Investigators opened Harris' gun safe and found 11 illegal assault rifles "packed tightly" inside among more than 75 other legal guns, investigators wrote.

Rauch noted in his report the CHP has a policy that prohibits officers from buying assault rifles that are illegal for the general public. Some other police agencies allow their officers to buy the guns.

Investigators said none of the illegal assault weapons were registered.

In another gun safe, officers found more guns, but those were all legal, Rauch wrote.

Bombs allegedly found

In Harris' barn, officers found a room containing CHP-related items including posters, gun cleaning kits and ammunition. During their search, officers found a green metal ammunition can. When officers looked inside, they found a short piece of wood with nails driven through it. The device was attached to a wire and a 9-volt battery and "some sort of sensor," Rauch wrote.

Investigators then noticed the device was resting on top of a VHS tape labeled "bomb incidents." Underneath was a pipe bomb with a fuse sticking out of it, Rauch wrote.

The search was immediately stopped and the Shasta County's bomb squad was called in. The bomb squad found another pipe bomb inside the ammo can, Rauch wrote.

Fredrick wrote that after they found the explosives, a sergeant called Harris who urged him to call Fredrick to talk about the devices. Harris told Fredrick, "Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot about all those things. Those are all props from when I taught bomb searches," Fredrick wrote.

The bomb squad later detonated the devices to render them safe, Rauch wrote.

According to Shasta County sheriff's Sgt. Marc St. Clair, the bomb squad also found a number of other potentially explosive devices including:

- A suspected letter bomb containing rim weights and "two pencil-like" objects inside. Technicians later determined the item to be inert.
- Four of CO2 charges with hobby fuses inserted in them. Two of the charges had nails or ball bearings glued to them.
- One of pipe bombs also had an automotive spark plug inserted into one of the caps.

St. Clair said none of the pipe bombs had gunpowder inside, though a jar of powder and a powder horn was found nearby. The bomb squad couldn't determine whether the CO2 charges were armed, St. Clair wrote.

Dozens of pieces of computer and electronic equipment also were seized from the home and taken to Sacramento for analysis, investigators said.

In one of the rooms, investigators found a shredder whose bin was filled with paper and shredded CDs, investigators wrote. In another room indentations in the carpet indicated a large desk recently had been removed and a computer moved to the floor, investigators said.

Officers also found and seized VHS tapes and digital camera memory cards found in Harris' personal SUV and in his work locker, investigators say.

Harris wasn't arrested on the day of the search. He turned himself in after a warrant was issued on Friday, 10 days later.

Bail was set at \$100,000. Harris bailed out about 70 minutes after he was booked.

He faces 13 felony counts, 11 of which charge him with possessing the illegal guns. The other felony counts are for the explosives and the methadone. He faces one misdemeanor count charging him with embezzlement by a public or private officer, which Chief Deputy District Attorney Josh Lowery says stems from the stolen drivers' licenses.

Lowery declined today to discuss the child-porn portion of the case, saying he couldn't due to the ongoing investigation. Lowery said the district attorney's office has assigned an investigator to the case as well, but he declined to identity the investigator or say what his or her field of expertise is.

Harris is to be arraigned on the gun and other counts April 9.



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