



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



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## Santa Paula Man Sentenced for Illegal Gun & Ammo Possession

VENTURA, Calif. – Santa Paula resident Refugio Cortez (DOB 07/18/86) was sentenced to 4 years 4 months state prison, Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today. Cortez was previously 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.

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

"As a prohibited person, the Defendant's illegal possession of firearms and ammunition posed a danger to our community," Ms. Schneir said. "The sentence in this case reflects the seriousness of this conduct."

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 prior felony conviction, which prohibits him from possessing firearms.

**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

