

Beat: News

California man accused of feeding girlfriend her own dog

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USPA News - A California man has been arrested after allegedly killing his estranged girlfriend's dog and then secretly feeding it to her during a brief reconcile, police said on Friday. He is facing charges of domestic violence, stalking, animal cruelty and weapon violations.

The investigation began on Tuesday when a woman contacted police in Redding and reported that she had been the victim of domestic violence and stalking at the hands of her ex-boyfriend, 34-year-old Ryan Eddy Watenpaugh of Palo Cedro. She said she was secretly fed her own dog earlier this month after the pet disappeared in August following a fight with her boyfriend. The argument took place on August 4 when Watenpaugh allegedly physically assaulted his girlfriend, causing her to flee out of the back door of her apartment in the city of Redding, located in Shasta County in Northern California. When she returned, both Watenpaugh and her Pomeranian "Bear" were gone. Redding Police Sergeant Todd Cogle said a brief reconcile in the relationship took place last week, after which Watenpaugh cooked his girlfriend a meal which included meat. Then, on Sunday, the woman received a text message from Watenpaugh, asking her how her dog tasted and referencing the meal he had cooked for her. "The content of the messages caused the victim to believe Watenpaugh was responsible for her missing dog, that he had killed it, and cooked it," Sgt. Cogle said. Although the couple broke up again, Watenpaugh continued to send the woman menacing text messages, telling her various things he planned to do with the remains of her dog, which included returning the paws to her. After those messages, at around 1 a.m. on Tuesday, the woman saw Watenpaugh walk up to her front door and place something near her door before walking away. When she went out and found a small bag, she discovered two dog paws belonging to her dog. Redding Police investigators obtained an arrest and search warrant for Watenpaugh on Wednesday, Sgt. Cogle said. Surveillance in the area of Watenpaugh's residence in Palo Cedro failed to locate him initially, but officers were able to carry out a traffic stop on his vehicle at 6 p.m. on Thursday, after which he was taken into custody. "Watenpaugh was interviewed regarding the victim's missing dog and the text messages. He admitted to sending the messages, and placing the dog paws at the victim's residence, but denied killing or cooking victim's dog," Sgt. Cogle said. In addition to the alleged dog killing, the woman said Watenpaugh had physically assaulted her numerous times over the period of several months during their tumultuous relationship, causing injuries such as bruises and minor abrasions. On two occasions, she tried to escape during the assaults but was held against her will by Watenpaugh. During a search of Watenpaugh's residence, investigators also discovered a Romanian variant of an AK-47 assault rifle as well as multiple high capacity magazines, Sgt. Cogle said. He said Watenpaugh was booked into the Shasta County Jail on charges of domestic violence, false imprisonment, stalking, and animal cruelty. Additional charges were pending for the weapons violations. Bail was set at \$250,000.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.

3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com