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Stephen Watson
Chief of Police

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2021

Subject: Arrest Made in Connection with Waterfront Explosions

Over the last several months, the Eureka Police Department's (EPD) Community Safety and Enhancement Team's (CSET) Park and Waterfront Ranger has received numerous reports of fireworks and loud explosions coming from the area of Bayshore Way in Eureka.

On January 9, 2021, a report of an explosion near the waterfront trail was received. After speaking with witnesses and reviewing video surveillance from the area, 53-year-old Darin Vitolo of Eureka was identified as the suspect.

On January 11, 2021, CSET and EPD's Problem Oriented Policing Team (POP) responded to the 1300 block of Bayshore Way for a probation search on Vitolo. During the search of Vitolo's shipping container, 29 grams of methamphetamine, US Currency, a scale, packaging material, and a pay/owe book were located.

The following items were located during a search of Vitolo's makeshift workshop: a live explosive device, materials for the manufacturing of explosive components (fuses, containers, tape), tools, and items used to build explosive devices. There were also bulk chemicals which could be used in the making of energetic materials used in explosives. Several exploded devices and commercial firework containers not California approved were also located on the property. All items were consistent with evidence found after previous reports of explosions heard around the waterfront area.

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team responded and rendered the functioning explosive device safe. A test conducted at the scene confirmed the device was filled with explosive material.

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Vitolo was transported and booked into the Humboldt County Correctional Facility for felon in possession of ammunition, manufacturing of explosives, possession of a destructive device, and controlled substances for sale. At the time of this release, Vitolo remains in custody.

“This type of criminal activity has no place in our community or society and the wanton disregard for the safety of our citizens who were in the vicinity at the time of these explosions is unacceptable. These were not annoying firework explosions. The devices that were built and detonated had the potential to inflict serious injuries to anyone that would have been in close proximity at the time of the explosion. We have reached out to our Federal Law Enforcement partners for assistance in this investigation, which could include the potential for federal prosecution,” said Captain Brian Stephens.

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Media Release Prepared by: PIO Brittany Powell