

Man caught in Wildwood shooting

BILL BARLOW
Staff Writer

WILDWOOD — A city man has been arrested after allegedly shooting a 20-year-old foreign worker in the head, the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office said Friday.

Detectives from Wildwood and the Prosecutor's Office took William Hoyle, 40, into custody Thursday at the Camden Police Department, where he had turned himself in Thursday afternoon, the Prosecutor's Office said in a news release.

The arrest came after an extensive manhunt, authorities said, which included a SWAT team raid on a Pacific Avenue home Wednesday morning.

Police received a report of shots fired at 10:26 p.m. Tuesday near the Cattle 'n Clover pub and steakhouse on Pacific Avenue. The victim was transported to At-

lantCare Regional Medical Center in Atlantic City with a gunshot wound to the head. She was later identified as Vilte Gruzdyte, a Lithuanian citizen visiting the country on a J-1 student visa. The alleged shooter had fled the scene, police said.

As of Friday, Gruzdyte remained in critical condition and on life support at the hospital. According to authorities, she was not the intended target but was instead a bystander.

"This is a tragic incident, and we are all as a community praying for Vilte and her family. Our office is taking all measures to make sure justice is served in this matter," county Prosecutor Jeffrey H. Sutherland said.

An investigation by Wildwood police and the Prosecutor's Office led to a home in the 4700 block of Pacific Avenue, where the search warrant was executed. Police said they found a 9mm handgun and clothing believed to have been worn by the assailant.

Police also charged David L. Johnson, 45, with hindering

apprehension in the shooting. Johnson was released on a summons pending court.

On Wednesday, police filed charges against Hoyle, a resident of the 200 block of Cresse Avenue, including attempted murder, aggravated assault, unlawful possession of a weapon, possession of a weapon for unlawful purposes, being a person not legally allowed to possess a weapon, possession of an untraceable firearm and possession of a high-capacity magazine.

Hoyle was taken to the Cape May County jail.

The investigation is ongoing and additional charges may be filed, Sutherland said. Anyone with information can call the Prosecutor's Office at 609-465-1135, Wildwood police at 609-522-0222 or Cape May County Crime Stoppers at 609-889-3597. Tipsters also can share information at cmcpo.tips or cmcsheriff.net.

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Menendez jury deliberations begin

LARRY NEUMEISTER & JAKE OFFENHARTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York City jury finished its first three hours of deliberations Friday without reaching a verdict in the corruption trial of U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, who is accused of taking bribes

and being a foreign agent for the Egyptian government. As he left the courthouse and headed to his waiting car, Menendez told reporters: "I have faith in God and in the jury."

On Friday morning, hours before jurors began deliberating, a buoyant Menendez entered the courtroom singing quietly to himself, keeping up the tune as his lawyers chatted nearby at the defense ta-

ble. Asked what he was singing, he said it was "a whole medley of songs," including "Amazing Grace."

Over a nine-week trial, federal prosecutors in New York have sought to convince the jury that the New Jersey Democrat and his wife accepted gold, cash and a Mercedes-Benz convertible from three businessmen from 2018 to 2023 in exchange for Menendez carrying out a variety of corrupt acts.

They say some bribes were for taking actions benefiting the government of Egypt, including speeding the delivery of U.S. military aid. Prosecutors also say Menendez, 70, tried to interfere with multiple criminal investigations and helped a businessman protect a monopoly awarded by the Egyptian government pertaining to the certification of U.S. meat exports to Egypt.

Menendez's lawyers have argued that the senator did

nothing wrong in his dealings with the businessmen and that nearly \$150,000 in gold bars and over \$480,000 in cash found at the couple's Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, home in a 2022 FBI raid were not bribe proceeds.

Two of the businessmen, Fred Daibes and Wael Hana, are on trial with Menendez. His wife's trial has been postponed while she recovers from breast cancer surgery. All of the defendants have pleaded not guilty.

Menendez did not testify, but he has insisted publicly that he took no bribes and did no special favors for Egypt.

Judge Sidney H. Stein instructed the jury on the law Friday morning so they would have a roadmap to follow during their deliberations. U.S. citizens may act as agents of a foreign government if they properly register as such, but not public officials like sitting U.S. senators.

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