

Gun-sale plea bargain ruled out; charge added

By Howard Pankratz
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Prosecutors say they will cut no deals with Mark Manes, the man accused of selling a gun to Columbine High School killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. "It is fair to say there will be no plea bargaining," Steve Jensen, deputy district attorney in Jefferson County, said Wednesday. "He will plead guilty, or we will go to trial."

On May 10, Manes was charged with unlawfully providing Klebold and Harris a semiautomatic TECDC9, one of four guns Harris and Klebold used in the school shooting.

On Wednesday, he was charged with illegal possession of a sawedoff shotgun. Authorities say Manes met with Klebold and Harris in the Rampart foothills on March 6 for target practice with the TEC-DC9 and two illegal sawed-off shotguns also used in the massacre.

They say Manes handled both shotguns that day, which was a crime. During a brief hearing in Jefferson County Court, Manes was advised of the new charge, and his arraignment was set for Aug. 18.

His lawyer, Robert Ransome, said that the 22-year-old Manes was "disappointed" by the filing of the second charge and "extremely overwhelmed" by the situation.

"I don't think it is necessary," said Ransome. "It seems to be a little bit of overkill. I have a fear that Mark might be scapegoated."

Manes has already admitted that he sold the TEC-DC9 to Klebold and Harris. But he claims he had no idea what they intended to do with the weapon.

But Jensen said the charges and the tough plea-bargain stance are appropriate given the crime.

"This crime is very unusual," Jensen said. "In most weapons cases, you don't have 15 dead people. We will attempt to see that the criminal-justice system works appropriately, but we intend to see that the gravity of the conduct is taken into consideration."

Also facing identical charges in the case is Philip Joseph Duran, 22. Duran worked at a Blackjack Pizza with Harris and Klebold and allegedly introduced Klebold and Harris to Manes - a close Duran friend - at the Jan. 23 Tanner Gun Show.

Duran purportedly was a courier for one of the two cash payments - totaling \$500 - made to Manes for the TEC-DC9.

The April 20 rampage at Columbine High School left 15 dead - including Harris and Klebold - and 23 injured. The two shotguns and the fourth gun used in the attack were bought for Harris and Klebold by Klebold's prom date, 18-year-old Roby Anderson. She has not been charged.

Unlawfully providing a gun to someone under 18 carries a penalty of two to six years in prison and a fine of \$2,000 to \$500,000. Unlawfully possessing a dangerous weapon carries a penalty of one to three years in prison and a fine of \$1,000 to \$100,000.