

Accused Pharmacy Robber Faces More Charges

By [STEPHEN THOMPSON](#) | The Tampa Tribune

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The man charged with robbing five pharmacies in the Tampa Bay area for drugs – and suspected of robbing three more – has told authorities the narcotics were for his own use, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office authorities say.

But investigators are not sure that's the whole story, said sheriff's spokeswoman Marianne Pasha.

They did believe Patrick Papach, however, earlier this year when he told them online gambling debts were the reason he stole more than \$54,000 from a company where he worked temporarily as an accountant, Pasha said.

As to why he stole roughly \$6,345 from a different company where he also worked temporarily, Papach, 33, never provided a reason, Pasha said.

On Thursday, Papach was identified as the suspect in the string of pharmacy robberies. He was found at 1126 King Arthur Court in Dunedin, at a condominium neighbors said was owned by his girlfriend's mother, and arrested on a Hillsborough warrant charging him with armed robbery.

In that case, the Publix pharmacy at 8975 Racetrack Road in Tampa was robbed Aug. 13, said Hillsborough sheriff's Detective Lisa Haber. A gunman pulled a firearm and demanded Oxycontin, she said.

On Friday, Pinellas sheriff's investigators filed charges against him in connection with four other pharmacy holdups.

In one, Papach is accused of robbing St. George Pharmacy, 31201 U.S. 19 N., in Pinellas County on July 15. Video shows the robber pointing a handgun at employees and a customer as he orders them to the floor, Pasha said. He also fired a shot into the ceiling.

After obtaining undisclosed types and amounts of drugs, he left through the front door, the video shows, stopping briefly to retrieve a hat, the spokeswoman said.

At least one victim in that holdup feels relieved now that Papach has been identified and arrested.

"I feel very secure," said Charles Brimmer. "I've pretty much been on guard since the event happened, so I definitely feel a lot better and a lot safer."

On Aug. 29, Papach robbed a Target pharmacy at 900 East Lake Road, Oldsmar, Pasha said. Papach approached the pharmacy, implied he had a weapon and showed a note to the pharmacist, demanding drugs, Pasha said. The pharmacist complied. Papach fled with an undisclosed amount of drugs, Pasha said.

Detectives say he also robbed a Walgreens at 1477 Main St., Dunedin, on Jan. 21 and a Walgreens at 33670 U.S. Highway 19 N., Palm Harbor, on Feb. 15.

Investigators were led to Papach after receiving an anonymous tip on the Crime Stoppers tip line Wednesday, Haber said; the information led detectives to obtaining Papach's identity. They put together a package of photographs and showed them to the victim in the Racetrack Road robbery who identified him as the culprit.

Late Thursday, detectives executed a search warrant at the Dunedin condominium and found a gun he told them he used in the robberies, they said. The firearm is described as a 9 mm Smith & Wesson with laser sight.

Authorities say Papach will be charged with three additional robberies as well.

He has been named a suspect – but has not been charged in – pharmacy robberies at the Armenia Pharmacy, 8338 N. Armenia Ave., Tampa; Publix Pharmacy, 12139 Linebaugh Ave., Tampa; and Sweetbay Pharmacy, 13016 Racetrack Road, Hillsborough County.

At the time of some of the holdups, Papach was out on bail in connection with two alleged schemes, according to Pinellas court records and Pinellas sheriff's officials.

In April, he was arrested on charges he electronically transferred to his own bank account more than \$54,000 from the accounts of Kelby Media Group, an Oldsmar company where he worked temporarily as an accountant, Pasha said. Papach told authorities he needed the money to pay back online gambling bets; detectives looked into his story and it checked out.

In a different case, he is accused of stealing \$6,345 from Nova Hotel Renovations and Construction, where he worked as an accountant after a temporary service found him work there, court records say. This time, Papach didn't provide a reason for the alleged theft and asked for his attorney, Pasha said.

Tribune reporters Josh Poltilove and Elaine Silvestrini and WFLA reporter Rod Challenger contributed to this report. Stephen Thompson can be




Patrick Papach

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