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Suspected Thief Accused of Grabbing Officer's Gun in Aspen Arrest

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A man arrested for alleged theft in downtown Aspen is now facing potential felony charges after reportedly attempting to disarm a police officer during the encounter, sparking safety concerns and questions about his mental health and history with local law enforcement.

According to the Aspen Police Department, the suspect, identified as 51-year-old George Kallas, allegedly reached for a police officer's service weapon while being taken into custody near Wagner Park on Monday evening. The incident unfolded around 6:10 pm after a reported theft call from East Durant Avenue.

Kallas appeared virtually from the Pitkin County Jail during a Tuesday court hearing, where Magistrate Judge Jill McConaughy informed him of the possible charges, including a class 6 felony for attempting to commit a crime related to disarming an officer, along with two class 2 misdemeanor offenses for resisting arrest and obstruction.

The judge questioned the brief police affidavit submitted by authorities, stating, “I have to say, I have some concerns about this affidavit. It’s extremely short and lacking in a lot of details.” The affidavit, authored by Patrol Officer Sarah Freihon, spans a single page and offers a minimal account of the events.

According to the document, Aspen’s regional emergency dispatch center had broadcast a theft call, and the victim identified the suspect. When contacted by police, Kallas allegedly refused to comply, walked away, and became volatile during the arrest. The statement reads that “Sergeant Turner felt the suspect grab the handle of his department-issued firearm and could feel the firearm being pulled in his holster.”

Deputy District Attorney Tony Hershey acknowledged the lack of detail but stressed the seriousness of the situation. “If he were to get his hands on that gun, he could hurt someone else, or if he got the gun and other officers are there, they’re going to kill him or shoot him, certainly. And that’s my concern,” Hershey said. He added, “This has been a continuing issue for Mr. Kallas, and it’s an unfortunate situation.”

Hershey also noted the limitations of the criminal justice system in managing cases involving mental health and homelessness. “It is not well-suited to addressing some of these mental health issues. I don’t know that jail is the right place for him,” he added.

Kallas, who has been arrested seven times by Aspen police since December, mostly for minor offenses like trespassing or sleeping in public areas, currently faces four active cases in Pitkin County. This is the first case that could result in felony prosecution. He has consistently refused legal representation and asked the court multiple times for detailed information about the accusations, despite already being advised.

“I’d like to hear what I’m accused of. What is their reason they have to stop me? What’s that accusation, and who’s the person that made that accusation?” Kallas asked during the hearing.

He also questioned why he hadn't been allowed to make a phone call and was being held before a conviction. Judge McConaughy clarified, "This hearing is not to determine whether you're guilty or innocent of the charges alleged," before eventually muting him due to repeated interruptions.

Kallas remains in Pitkin County Jail on a \$2,500 bond but may be released on his own recognizance pending further review. His next court appearance is scheduled for August 4, when prosecutors are expected to determine whether formal charges will be filed.

Judge Ashley Andrews, who is handling Kallas' other cases, urged him last week to accept help navigating the legal process. "You don't wait for a response; you don't listen to the response," she said. "And I understand that's probably related to some of the mental health struggles that you're facing."