

Suspect in five-day shooting rampage is a 'serial killer,' police say

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A Sylmar man described by police as a "serial killer" was charged Tuesday with murder and attempted murder and is believed to be responsible for a five-day shooting rampage on Los Angeles area roadways that killed four people and wounded several others, authorities said.

Los Angeles Police Department officials said they recovered a shotgun with a pistol grip from Alexander Hernandez that connects him to three shootings Sunday in the San Fernando Valley that left three people dead.

Hernandez, 34, was charged in the killing of a man found slumped over the wheel of his truck in Pacoima on Thursday and with shooting at a couple who were unhurt Friday in West Hollywood.

"Nothing makes a homicide investigator's heart beat faster than realizing he has a serial killer. And that is what this man was," sheriff's Chief of Detectives Bill McSweeney said. "This man is and was a serial killer.... I don't think we will ever have an adequate explanation for these terrible murders. How do you explain anything like this?"

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LAPD officials said they expect additional charges to be filed against Hernandez in connection with Sunday's shootings in the Valley.

"We're very confident of that," said Deputy Chief Kirk Albanese, who heads the LAPD's detective bureau. "We believe we have the right man."

Hernandez was also charged with animal cruelty in connection with the shooting of three dogs in Pacoima on Saturday. Two of the dogs were killed; the third was wounded.

LAPD officials said they believe Hernandez acted alone and was randomly shooting people on local streets and freeways. Albanese said investigators have yet to determine a motive, saying Hernandez had been uncooperative with detectives since his arrest late Sunday.

Hernandez failed to appear at his scheduled arraignment Tuesday afternoon. A sheriff's detective said Hernandez refused to leave his jail cell, prompting a judge to issue a warrant for him to appear in court Wednesday.

Police said the recent shootings followed a similar, unusual pattern, involving a lone man firing a shotgun at close range from a tan or gold sport utility vehicle.

"He inflicted horrific injuries," Albanese said.

Hernandez's criminal record includes convictions for drugs and weapons possession, according to court records and the Los Angeles County district attorney's office.

Court records also show that a judge granted a restraining order for a former girlfriend against Hernandez in 2010. In the documents, Stephanie Soto described several episodes she said made her concerned for the safety of herself and her two young daughters.

In January 2010, Hernandez refused to let her leave a garage during an argument, she said in the records. After she threatened to call police, she said, he "got a screw driver and began to hurt himself on his chest."

During another fight three months later, Soto said in the records, Hernandez got out of a moving car she was driving and hit the vehicle with his fist. Soto said that when she drove back later with her daughters, Hernandez "threw himself in the middle of the street and began to hit the car again."

Hernandez, she said, also broke her car windows three times and sent her text messages saying, "I'm going to blow up your car." (article continues)

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< <http://www.latimes.com/local/crime/la-me-valley-shooting-20140827-story.html>>.