

## Sawed-off shotgun leads to conviction of city man

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**B**Y KEITH EPPS

A Fredericksburg man received a suspended sentence Thursday as the result of a drunken argument that landed him a felony conviction for possession of a sawed-off shotgun.

Francis Christopher Despanie, 30, pleaded guilty in Fredericksburg Circuit Court for possessing the illegal shotgun. He was sentenced to three years in prison, but all of the time was suspended.

Prosecutor Travis Bird said the charge stemmed from an early Aug. 26 argument outside Despanie's home at the Commons at Cowan Boulevard next to the city police station.

According to the evidence, Despanie and another man who'd come to a gathering at Despanie's home were arguing about who had the more significant experiences in the Marine Corps when Despanie brandished a gun and police were called.

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Despanie was gone when police arrived, but returned to the scene a short time later. He was intoxicated but had no weapon, police said.

Bird said police searched his home after Despanie admitted brandishing a gun. Five guns were seized, including two AR-15's, an AK-47 and two pistols. One of the weapons had a shortened barrel, leading to the felony charge.

Also seized were ammunition, related equipment and a suppressor that belonged to the Marine Corps.

Bird said the military was informed about the suppressor, but declined to prosecute.

All of the weapons were forfeited and Despanie was ordered to get mental health treatment.

Court records show that Despanie also received suspended jail time in a lower court on two misdemeanor convictions, brandishing and being drunk in public.

Keith Epps: 540/374-5404

**kepps@freelancestar.com**