

## California man held since March on drug charge released on bond

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The Dispatch and The Rock Island Argus

Saturday, October 24, 2015

A California man held in the Henry County Jail on \$1 million bond since his March arrest for allegedly having drugs was released on a \$50,000 recognizance bond on Friday.

The 35 pounds of cocaine and 10 pounds of methamphetamine were valued at more than 42 million, according to officials.

On Friday, Judge Jeffrey O'Connor rules that there was no compelling reason to hold Jose Beltran, 55, of Arbuckle, Calif., pending the state's appeal of his ruling that cost the state its evidence.

In August, Judge O'Connor

granted a defense motion for suppression of evidence, saying he didn't think appellate courts had addressed whether the second officer on a scene can conduct drug interdiction or if he's bound by rules that limit that to the officer who did the traffic stop, unless there is a voluntary consent to search.

Defense attorney Larry Vandersnick immediately sought his client's release, but the judge said a separate motion and hearing were required.

On Friday, the judge said statutes use "quite strong language" when describing whether to continue to detain person and said he would

have detained Mr. Beltran "if I believed the defendant would commit acts of revenge or put other people's safety, health or livelihood at risk if he were put loose."

The judge said the \$50,000 recognizance bond would be a compelling amount for California authorities to seize, should Mr. Beltran miss future court appearances. He also said attorney Larry Vandersnick will retain Mr. Beltran's passport.

"If he chooses to leave the country, he probably could - especially to Mexico - but he would never get back in, so it is a deterrent," said Judge O'Connor.