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Homeless man could get 5 years for wearing handcuff keys

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For wearing handcuff keys on a necklace draped around his neck, a homeless Miami Beach man could face years in prison.

Prosecutors on Tuesday formally charged Michael Gonzalez, 22, with disorderly intoxication, marijuana possession and two counts of possession of a concealed handcuff key -- a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

"It's an actual felony," prosecutor Barbara Teresa Govea explained to Miami-Dade Circuit Judge John Thornton, who questioned the charge.

"There's got to be some kind of constitutional violation in there somewhere," Assistant Public Defender Michelle Prescott grumbled to the court.

Actually, the Florida Legislature passed the law after the 1998 murders of two Tampa deputies and a state trooper. Hank Earl Carr shot and killed them after he escaped his cuffs using a universal handcuff key hidden on a necklace.

Gonzalez was arrested Aug. 16 after Miami Beach police said he was harassing women on the South Beach sand. In a report, Officer Errol Vidal wrote that he found a small amount of marijuana in the man's pocket and "two handcuff keys concealed under his shirt on a necklace."

Also under Gonzalez's shirt: a tattoo on his right shoulder, with the word "anarchy" and shooting flames.

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