

LOCAL NEWS

Arson charges dismissed against Mariners Harbor man

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STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

A Mariners Harbor man is off the hook for allegedly torching two cars.

Arson charges were dismissed against David Guadarrama after a judge determined the 28-year-old Simonson Avenue resident was not at the scene when videotape captured two vehicles being set on fire in the 200 block of Jewett Avenue on July 7.

Justice Leonard P. Rienzi ruled evidence presented to a grand jury was "legally insufficient" to support charges of arson, reckless endangerment and criminal mischief against Guadarrama.

"David and his family are ecstatic [over the dismissal]," said Guadarrama's attorney, Thomas A. Tormey, Jr.

Police and prosecutors alleged that Guadarrama and Louis Trinidad, 25, of Port Richmond Avenue, were caught on videotape dousing two cars with gasoline and setting them ablaze shortly before 3 a.m. July 7 because Guadarrama's sister, who had sold one of the vehicles, was having trouble collecting payments from the buyer.

The cars were torched to send the delinquent buyer a message, police contended, adding that the victim identified Guadarrama as one of the two men in the video.

But Tormey maintained that the tape, which was shot at night, was poor quality and impossible for the victim to

jail time.

Efrain Gauthier and Chaz Stokes pleaded guilty yesterday to ripping off a 2007 Audi A6 in Manhattan last month then driving to Staten Island before police stopped them near Drumgoole Road West and Arden Avenue.

Gauthier, 21, of 14th Street,

copped to a count of unauthorized use of a vehicle and was sentenced to 60 days behind bars.

Stokes, 18, of 16th Street, took a plea to a count of criminal possession of stolen property then released on his own recognizance.

Under the deal, Stokes

faces 40 days in jail when he returns to state Supreme Court, St. George, Jan. 26 for sentencing in front of Rienzi. Police acting on a report that the car was stolen from Prince and Crosby streets in Manhattan, stopped the vehicle at about 1 a.m. Nov. 19.

When officers approached

the vehicle, Stokes was driving and Gauthier was in the front passenger seat.

Police also recovered a GPS device and several pairs of designer sunglasses, all of which had been reported missing about a half-hour earlier from a car parked on Correll Avenue in Rossville.

Stokes initially told the officers his uncle had given him the car before changing his story and claiming he had borrowed it from another person, a law enforcement source said.

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