

New Bedford Man Twice Arrested for Carrying Illegal Firearms Sentenced to Prison

A 31-year-old New Bedford man arrested twice in Fall River during the past three years on various illegal firearm charges was sentenced to three to four years in state prison earlier this week, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Eric Espinal pleaded guilty in Fall River Superior Court to indictments charging him with two counts of carrying an illegal firearm and one count each of carrying a loaded illegal firearm, carrying a large capacity illegal firearm and negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

On May 7, 2016, at approximately 4:45 p.m., Fall River Police Officer William Platt was working his assigned uniform patrol shift. On that day, while operating a marked police cruiser, Platt saw the defendant, Eric Espinal walking on Middle Street. Due to a flyer distributed during roll call, Platt knew Espinal was a person of interest in a shooting. Further, the flyer advised that Espinal was possibly armed and that Espinal was prohibited from possessing a firearm. Platt attempted to speak with Espinal on Middle Street but Espinal turned on to Whipple Street. Platt turned his vehicle around and drove past Espinal who had ducked down behind a parked pickup truck. In his side-view mirror, Platt saw Espinal stopped in the driveway of 255 Whipple Street and stopped his cruiser.

Upon getting out of his cruiser, Officer Platt immediately saw Espinal had a black pistol in his right hand. Officer Platt yelled to Espinal to drop the gun, but Espinal refused and fled. Officer Platt immediately advised his fellow officers of

his observations and gave chase until Espinal climbed over a six-foot fence and continued to flee. Officers received information from neighbors about Espinal's path of flight, and Sergeant Jason Pacheco arrested Espinal on Osborne Street.

Officers searched the surrounding area for approximately two hours and recovered a black .380 caliber firearm, loaded with 13 rounds of ammunition.

While out on bail for the 2016 case, the defendant was arrested again on July 30, 2017. On that day, at approximately 5:20 PM, officers were dispatched to the area of 451 Fourth Street in Fall River for a report of shots fired from a motor vehicle. Officers spoke with two residents of 453 Fourth Street who described being on their front porch when they saw an older black Hyundai in front of their residence. The driver, a light skinned male, possibly Hispanic, with braided hair yelled, "I will fucking kill you", and then fired a silver handgun three times. The car then fled North on Fourth Street.

At approximately 6:30 PM, Officer Marc Corriea was stopped in a marked cruiser at the intersection of Rodman Street and Plymouth Avenue when he saw a car matching the description from the shots fired call travelling north on Plymouth Avenue. As the car turned onto Rodman Street, OfficerCorreia saw the operator was a light-skinned Hispanic male with braided hair. Officer Correia performed a three-point turn and attempted to stop the car when it rapidly accelerated through the parking lot of Hartwell Commons onto Hartwell Street. The driver lost control of the car and crashed into a pole. The driver attempted to keep driving north on Hartwell Street but the car had three flat tires. At this point, Officer Correia saw the driver (Espinal) reaching under the passenger seat. Officer Correia drew his firearm and trained it on Espinal, who finally exited the car. A search of the area under the passenger seat revealed an unloaded S&W model 36 revolver.

The cases were prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Cahillane and the three to four year state prison sentence was imposed by Judge Joseph Leighton. The defendant was also placed on probation for an additional year.

"The defendant was out on bail for one gun case that was connected to a shooting where the defendant was carrying a fully loaded illegal firearm and was then arrested with a second illegal gun," District Attorney Quinn said. "This defendant is a danger to the community and is contributing to the lawlessness that afflicts our cities."