

Roosevelt man sues Nassau over false arrest

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A Roosevelt man has filed an \$80-million federal lawsuit against Nassau County, its Police Department and several officers, one of whom lied to a grand jury when he said he had recovered a gun he saw the man drop.

The officer, Craig Buonora, was convicted later of third-degree perjury and is now on desk duty in the Third Precinct in Williston Park.

Darryl Coggins, 26, had his constitutional rights violated by illegal acts, including false arrest, unlawful imprisonment and malicious prosecution, attorney Fred Brewington said in papers filed last month.

Coggins was charged with having a gun, resisting arrest and speeding after a traffic stop in Floral Park on Oct. 9, 2004.

Brewington said his client fled after one of the two Nassau officers threatened him.

Buonora testified that he found a 9-mm pistol that fell as Coggins fled after being pulled over. Fellow Officer James Vara backed him.

But later a village police officer who joined the foot chase said he found the gun 40 minutes after the failed chase. That was confirmed by records.

The district attorney's office and the Nassau police internal affairs unit investigated and 10 months later all charges against Coggins were dismissed. Buonora was subsequently indicted for perjury.

Law enforcement sources said a deal allowed Buonora to plead guilty to the misdemeanor charge and to keep his job, but not work on the streets. He pleaded guilty Nov. 17, 2005, and in January 2006 Nassau Judge Jeffrey Brown gave him a conditional discharge and a \$1,000 fine, prosecutors said. Buonora's partner, Vara, has been facing disciplinary action over the incident since April 2006.

Buonora, a police officer since 1997, refused to talk when reached at his desk yesterday. Vara, a highway patrolman, could not be reached, nor could the Floral Park officer.

Nassau Police Commissioner Lawrence Mulvey said he had no comment on a case involving pending litigation.

Brewington said he was disappointed with the Buonora plea deal, "but to learn this person who said he gave false testimony to a grand jury is still a Nassau police officer and that the other officer has yet to be disciplined, is outrageous and violates every sense of public confidence in the D.A.'s office and the Police Department."

Mulvey was not with the department when the incident occurred, and Kathleen Rice did not start as district attorney until January 2006.

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