

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trial For Man Who Allegedly Burned Client's Vehicle Gets Underway In St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- The trial of James Nibbs, Jr. got underway Wednesday morning before V.I. Superior Court Judge Denise Francois, the Superior Court announced on Thursday.

Mr. Nibbs, 40, is facing one count of second-degree arson, stemming from a Dec. 28, 2015 incident.

Several witnesses, including the victim, Erline Roach, took the stand to testify on the prosecution's behalf. Ms. Roach told jurors that she took her car to Cliff Tonge to be repaired. Mr. Nibbs was also working at the same mechanic shop at the time. Ms. Roach said she paid Tonge \$700 before he did the work, but after she retrieved her vehicle, she

noticed that the work on her car was not completed. She called Mr. Tonge, the owner of the repair shop, to tell him that she was still experiencing problems with the car.

“Two days later, Mr. Tonge and Mr. Nibbs called me. I went to the police station to make a report. While at the police station, Mr. Nibbs left a voice message on my handset,” Ms. Roach testified.

Prosecutors are also relying on that voice message to prove their case against Mr. Nibbs. The voice, which sounded like a man’s, demanded money from Ms. Roach, then threatened to burn something.

Ms. Roach, who said she knew Mr. Nibbs and had heard his voice at least four times on the telephone and three times in person, said she recognized the voice on the recording as Nibbs’.

Mr. Tonge, who also offered testimony, stated that he has known Mr. Nibbs for about 14 years. And after listening to a replay of the voice message inside the courtroom, Mr. Tonge told the court that it was Mr. Nibbs’ voice on the recording.

According to an affidavit filed by police detective, Alex Dorsett, Ms. Roach told police that on Oct. 10, 2015, Mr. Nibbs left a message on her mobile phone that he wanted his money or else he would come and burn her vehicle. Then, on Dec. 8, 2015, at about 12:30 a.m., Mr. Nibbs went to the Mariel C. Newton Command and reported to a police officer that he just burned a vehicle in the Frydenhoj area. On that same day at about 6:30 a.m., Ms. Roach called 911 and reported that someone burnt her vehicle.

During Mr. Nibbs’ arrest on Jan. 21, Mr. Dorsett played the voicemail recording that was left on Ms. Roach’s cellular phone and Mr. Nibbs said, “I didn’t mean the message; I was just upset at the time,” Mr. Dorsett wrote in his affidavit.

Mr. Nibbs’ trial resumed Thursday morning.