

Four suspects facing jail time for gas station robbery

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 20 March 2020 06:31



Four Native American men, three of them teenagers, are now facing up to 12 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to robbing a gas station store south of Gallup last April.

Armed with pistols, the robbery served them less than \$50 in liquor.

The four - Julian Silversmith, his son, Aurelius Eddie, and two associates, Kevin Marquez and Karl Thompson - are now waiting to be sentenced by a federal judge in Albuquerque.

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Although prosecuted in federal court, the investigation that led to their arrest was handled by deputies and investigators for the McKinley County Sheriff's Office.

According to Sheriff's reports, three men entered the Mustang Store in Vanderwagen about 3:30 pm on April 18, 2019. Two of them were carrying pistols.

The three confronted customers and store staff. At least two shots were fired into the air. While no one was injured, the report said all of the customers and clerks were terrified and fearful of being killed.

Within a couple of minutes, the three grabbed all of the liquor they could carry and ran out of the store. As they ran, they dropped several bottles in the store and just outside. They then got into a car where a fourth man was waiting and drove off.

Deputies got to the store within minutes and began interviewing witnesses and watching the robbery via the store's surveillance camera.

By 4:30 pm, Sheriff's investigators received the lead that led to the arrest of the four men.

One of the witnesses at the scene, identified as only L. L., told deputies that he had stopped at the store with his wife and two children, to buy some food. He waited outside while the rest of his family entered the store.

As they entered the store, he said he saw a car drive up and three young men get out and walk to the door of the store. As they passed by, he said he heard them talk about robbing the store.

A minute after they entered the store, he said he heard gunfire and a minute later saw them run out of the store carrying liquor bottles in their arms. They ran to their vehicle and sped away.

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The witness said he recognized the driver, who he identified as Julian Silversmith. Deputies, with the assistance of Navajo police, arrested Silversmith and Eddie the next day. Eddie gave up the names of the other two men and within a week, they were arrested.

A decision was made early on to turn the case over to federal authorities. Although the store was not on the reservation, federal jurisdiction kicked in because the Mustang was owned by Giant, which had similar stores in Arizona and Colorado. The whiskey that was stolen was also produced out of state.

By August, all four men had pleaded guilty to interference with interstate commerce and brandishing a firearm during an act of violence.

Eddie, when interviewed after his arrest, said he had no idea why he got involved with the robbery. The investigation revealed that Eddie, who was 18, had been raised by his strict grandmother and had only recently reunited with his father.

Federal agents learned that it was Silversmith's idea to rob the store and, according to Thompson, he had to "pump up his son" to get him to agree to take part in the operation.

Eddie and Silversmith were transported to the U.S. Marshal. Thompson was released on his own recognizance by a judge and transported to the U. S. Marshal and Marques was held on \$1000 cash bond pending court.