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PRESS RELEASE

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Three Chico Residents Plead to Attempted Arson of Chico State University Police Vehicle

Three college-aged Chico students this morning admitted their guilt in court for attempting to set a Chico State University police car on fire with a Molotov cocktail at the CSUC Police station in the days following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Maria Magana, 21, Clarissa Pauline Volasgis, 20, and Autum Nichole Cossins, 20, each pled no contest in the Butte County Superior Court to one count of felony attempted arson.

The charges stem from an incident which took place on May 31, 2020 at the Chico State University Police station, which is located on the ground floor of a four-story parking structure across the street from the CSUC campus.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the incident began during the early morning hours of May 31 when the three defendants, who were roommates at an apartment in Chico, decided to “send a message” about police brutality by burning a police car. After failing to find both the California Highway Patrol headquarters in Chico and the Chico Police Department, they settled on the University Police station. Dressed in dark clothing, the trio set a series of bushes on fire outside of the parking structure on the other side of the police station about 2:30 a.m. and then fled the area. A University Police dispatcher detected smoke while she was inside the police station. A Chico State University Police Officer investigating the source of the smoke subsequently located three small burned and smoldering bushes along the 200 block of Normal Avenue.

Later that morning, at approximately 4:30 a.m., the trio drove a Ford SUV to a gas station nearby the University campus and were captured on surveillance tape filling cups and a liquor bottle with gasoline. They returned to the University where Volasgis entered the first floor of the parking structure while Magana remained outside as a lookout. Cossins remained in the vehicle as a getaway driver. Volasgis attempted to set the University Chief of Police’s vehicle on fire with a Molotov cocktail made from a liquor bottle and a cloth wick. The chief’s vehicle had been parked just outside the secured police parking area on the first floor outside the police station. A police dispatcher viewing surveillance cameras from inside the station saw Volasgis set herself on fire briefly and then throw part of the incendiary device onto the chief’s car. (See attached video.)

Luckily the fire went out as a responding University Police Sergeant arrived at the location and

chased Volasgis and Magana on foot. They jumped into the Ford SUV that had been waiting on W. 3rd Street, east of Chestnut Street with Cossins in the driver's seat. The SUV then left the area at a high rate of speed. The sergeant noted the rear license plate was not visible as if it had been covered with something.

With the assistance of the local FBI office, University Police officers immediately began an extensive investigation and located footage of the vehicle and suspects, and were able to determine the vehicle's license plate. With the assistance of the surveillance footage, license plate, interviews, and information from community members, all three women were eventually identified, and arrested. Volasgis and Magana were booked into the Butte County Jail on June 1, 2020. Cossins was booked into the Butte County Jail on June 2, 2020.

All three defendants are next due in court on August 5, 2020 for sentencing (Case # 20CF02808, Case # 20CF02807, Case # 20CF02806). All three remain in custody with no bail. They each face a maximum term of 3 years in state prison.