

EDITOR'S PICK

Bombing case in Spotsylvania sent to grand jury

Keith Epps

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Patrick Arcand was trying to put out a fire in his basement in Spotsylvania County early March 29 when he heard a sound he described as “like the biggest firecracker you ever heard.”

The explosion came from a homemade bomb that had been planted in his home, according to evidence presented Tuesday in Spotsylvania General District Court. Charges against the woman accused of planting the device, 30-year-old Dina Elizabeth Guardado of Prince William County, were sent to a Spotsylvania grand jury following Tuesday’s preliminary hearing.

Guardado, whose name is listed as Gaurdado in some court documents, is charged with arson and possessing bomb-making materials.

Arcand said he was alerted to the fire at the home on Chancellor Road by a brother who lives with him. Arcand said he found a “huge” fire in the basement that exploded as he was standing next to it. He was struck by debris from the explosion, but was not seriously injured.

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After dousing the blaze with a fire extinguisher, Arcand said he noticed two pressure cookers and a crock pot that had not previously been there.

Shawn Divelbliss, an assistant fire marshal for the county, said such items as black powder, screws, nails and aluminum foil were recovered in the ensuing investigation. The items had been combined in an apparent attempt to make an explosive, he said.

Guardado was quickly developed as a suspect and a search of her home in Prince William turned up a receipt for a pressure cooker, a bag of empty black powder containers and pressure cooker manuals, among other things, according to testimony from Divelbliss and a state police

investigator.

They testified that police also searched Guardado's computer and recovered 30 pages of recent searches for such things as "how to turn a pressure cooker into a bomb," "where to buy black powder," and "how to burn a house down."

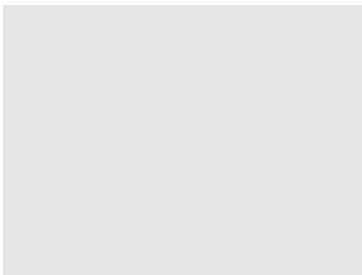
It was not made clear during the hearing why Guardado may have been at odds with the Arcands. Arcand testified that he and his brothers began having problems with Guardado soon after she moved next door to them in Prince William a few years ago. He described one incident in which he said she barged into his home and sat on his couch, crying hysterically. He said he threatened to call the police if she didn't leave and eventually took out a protective order against her.

In response to a question from defense attorney Ronald "Jeh" Hicks, Arcand said he had had no romantic involvement with Guardado.

Hicks argued that while Commonwealth's Attorney Travis Bird had put on plenty of evidence of an explosion and a strained relationship, there was nothing directly tying Guardado to the crime. But Judge Richard McGrath said the circumstantial evidence presented was more than sufficient to send the case forward.

The hearing was interrupted briefly when Guardado's father, Luis Guardado, blurted out that he wanted to question Arcand, who was still on the witness stand. McGrath had bailiffs immediately remove the father from the courtroom. After the hearing was over, the judge had Luis Guardado and his son brought before him. He warned them not to contact the Arcands or another person living in their home or they would risk being placed in jail.

Luis Guardado said something about his First Amendment rights before the judge sternly warned him again not to needlessly get himself in trouble. He told Guardado that his daughter was in capable hands with Hicks and did not need his intervention in the courtroom.



Guardado

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