# Police: Cop faked stops

## Warrant says Torrington officer ran plates, falsified warnings

**BY KEVIN LITTEN**
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

TORRINGTON — Torrington Police officer Hector Medina was engaged in a "clear and lengthy pattern of criminal behavior" over six months before his February arrest that included unlawfully claiming he was pulling over drivers whom he never stopped.

In court documents unsealed Tuesday, police allege Medina was cruising store parking lots, past residential driveways and state parks, collecting license plate information and entering the information as a traffic stop that resulted in a verbal warning. The warrant does not speculate on Medina's motive, but the department requires every officer to make at least one traffic stop during each shift, though they are not required to write a citation.

The warrants in the Medina case further allege that Medina was running the license plate information through a state police database that tracks the demographics of residents stopped for traffic offenses. At least 29 different plates were run when none of those people were pulled over, police said.

Since Medina's arrest, two other officers have been placed on paid administrative leave, but police have declined to say whether they are investigating similar allegations.

The 58 felony counts of computer crimes against Medina are related to unlawful use of

*See* **OFFICER**, *Page* **5A**

CONTRIBUTED

**Former Torrington officer Hector Medina faces 58 counts of crimes related to his use of state police database.**

# OFFICER: Price Rite stop start of probe

*Continued from Page One*

the database; the 29 misdemeanor false entry charges are filed in connection with entering them as traffic stops; and the six felony forgery counts are charged because police allege Medina signed six monthly reports affirming his on-duty activities, including traffic stops. The false statement charge was filed under a separate warrant because Medina claimed in an affidavit that he made two traffic stops police said never happened.

A warrant charging Medina with the 93 counts of computer crimes, false entry and forgery; plus the separate warrant charging Medina with making a false statement; were both unsealed Tuesday after the Republican-American objected to prosecutors' motions to seal the false statement warrant and redact the 93-count warrant to protect victim's identities. The Republican-American argued it was in the public interest to release both warrants in their entirety.

Judge Richard M. Marano agreed, writing that prosecutors "failed to make any specific assertions of harm that could occur if" the 93-count warrant was unsealed. In releasing the false statement warrant, which prosecutors said contained information that could prejudice judge and jury because it was collected during an internal investigation that can't be used in criminal trials, Marano determined the information is not "graphic or inflammatory" or "unfairly prejudicial."

**THE FALSE STATEMENT WARRANT SHOWS** that police became suspicious of Medina after Litchfield County Dispatch alerted police to a stop Medina made in the Price Rite parking lot in the north end on the evening of July 10. Dispatcher Douglas Tillotson called police to tell them that Medina had stopped a Mitsubishi Gallant owned by a man wanted in New York, asking police whether Medina had contact with the man.

Officer Kevin Sultaire, who took the call from the dispatcher, spoke to Medina by phone

but Medina said that while he had stopped the man in question for having a headlight out, he didn't realize there was a warrant for the man's arrest, according to the warrant. Medina told Sultaire that he believed the man worked at Price Rite, and four police officers were sent to the grocery store to find him.

Once they arrived, officers spoke with a Price Rite worker who had purchased the Gallant from the man with the warrant five months earlier and had not transferred the title. Police said the man also told them he was never stopped by Medina and he showed officers that he did not have a headlight out.

**AFTER INVESTIGATORS BEGAN LOOKING INTO** the Price Rite case, they identified a suspicious traffic stop that Medina also had coded as a "verbal warning" in the department's computer system. Detective Kevin Tieman interviewed the man Medina identified in the computer system, and he claimed he was at home sleeping at the time he was allegedly pulled over and that his car was parked in the driveway overnight, the warrant states.

Those two cases were used to obtain an affidavit from Medina in which he claimed to have stopped both men during routine traffic stops. Because both men said in sworn statements that Medina never stopped them, Medina was placed on administrative leave, and he resigned on Aug. 31, 2011, the day he was told the Board of Public Safety was going to hold public hearings about their plans to fire him.

Information gathered during internal investigations cannot be used to prosecute a criminal

case, so the department opened a separate investigation into other possible incidents where Medina may have recorded a traffic stop without actually making one. From Jan. 1, 2011 through July 9, investigators found Medina recorded issuing three infractions and 97 verbal warnings.

Police identified 29 cases where they were able to reach the owner of a motor vehicle whom Medina claimed to issue a verbal warning to. In every case, police conducted interviews and obtained sworn statements from residents who said they were not actually stopped by Medina.

In most cases, residents who spoke to police said they were parked during the time Medina claims to have stopped them. In one case, a woman said her car was parked at Fuessenich Park all night because her son played for the Torrington Titans and was away at a game in New Hampshire. In another case, a woman said her boyfriend was using her car and had it parked at the old Driscoll Mortuary while he was cleaning the building.

Police investigated 44 of 97 traffic stops that resulted in verbal warnings, and found 15 stops were legitimate, police said in the warrant.

"The decision was made to stop further criminal investigation into additional motor vehicle stops reported by Medina at this time as it had become evident as shown above as to the clear and lengthy pattern of criminal behavior Medina was involved in for at least the past six months as a Torrington Police Officer," the warrant said.

*Visit rep-am.com to comment on this story.*