Suspect in Stolen Car Ring Arrested

Newark – A suspect in a car theft ring was captured by Essex County sheriff’s officers last night after a series of run-ins with the suspect throughout the day.

Sheriff Armando Fontoura stated that officers from his department on routine quality of life patrol observed a parked 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee with no front license plate parked in front of 195 First Street shortly before 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

Upon accessing the vehicle’s status by running the rear license plate and the vehicle identification number for its possible criminal history, it was determined that the vehicle was stolen from an auto yard operated by CSX Railroad Police in Elizabeth. It was further determined that the vehicle was wanted for latent fingerprints as part of a cache of stolen cars from the same location within the past month.
Sheriff Fontoura said that his officers staked the car out while awaiting CSX Police. Suddenly, the car’s ignition was activated remotely and a suspect raced from a nearby building and entered the car.

At gunpoint, the sheriff’s officers repeatedly ordered the suspect to turn off the ignition and exit the Jeep. These commands were ignored by the suspect who put the car in gear and accelerated away from the scene. As the suspect sped away, the vehicle hit sheriff’s officer Dennis Kihlberg who was knocked to the ground.

Kihlberg and his partner pursued the suspect vehicle, traveling south on First Street. The Jeep traveled at a high rate of speed and dangerous passed a school bus full of children and then it ran a red light.

Fontoura added that at this point his officers exercised sound judgment and terminated the pursuit for fear of danger to the public.

A few hours later another sheriff’s officer on patrol encountered the stolen Jeep being driven by a male who matched the description of the earlier suspect at Park Avenue and 6th Street. Once again, the sheriff’s officer discontinued pursuit due to the risk of pedestrians and other vehicles in the immediate area.

“Motor vehicle pursuit under these conditions is extremely hazardous to our officers and the general public,” Sheriff Fontoura noted. “Terminating pursuit of the same suspect twice was the smart thing to do. It has been our experience to know that we will soon again cross paths with these suspects.”

The stolen Jeep was spotted for the third and last time by sheriff’s officers at 10:50 p.m. when it pulled up in front of 163 North 3rd Street where the driver exited and entered the residence.

Back-up units immediately responded to the scene and the suspect, later identified as Kelvin Speight, age 47, was seen running from the rear of the building.

Fontoura said the officers initiated foot pursuit and chased Speight through neighboring backyards and over a barbed wire fence.

The sheriff’s officers found Speight hiding under a bench in a nearby garage. The suspect again ran from the officers and attempted to scale a fence but was pulled to the ground. Speight fought with the officers by kicking them and flailing his arms. He was eventually subdued and arrested.

During a pat-down search the key to the stolen Jeep was discovered on Speight’s person.

Speight was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, resisting arrest by flight, resisting arrest by physical force on a law enforcement officer, receiving stolen property and eluding police. Speight was also found to be the subject of open criminal warrants issued by the Newark and East Orange municipal courts.

Prior to his lodging at the county jail, the suspect was treated for the injuries he received while fleeing at East Orange Medical Center. Officer Kihlberg did not require medical attention.

Newark municipal court Judge Bahir Kamil set bail on Speight at $95,000 cash bond only. The suspect will be arraigned later this week.