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Drunken driving defendant challenges radar gun accuracy

Associated Press

EASTON, Pa. - The lawyer for a Northampton County man charged with speeding and drunken driving is trying to get part of the case thrown out over concerns about the reliability of state police radar guns.

At issue in the case is the reliability of the Decatur Genesis-brand radar gun, which some troopers said would occasionally produce erroneous readings when pointed at stationary objects.

A leading critic of the devices, former state police technician J.T. Shingara, testified Friday at a hearing in Northampton County court that the Decatur Genesis guns can give false readings when they are plugged into the cigarette lighter socket in running police cruisers.

Allentown attorney Jason Jenkins called Shingara to the stand in an attempt to pick apart an otherwise routine case against a client, Joshua Losito, who was pulled over for speeding, then charged with drunken driving on Dec. 4, 2003.

Jenkins has argued that the initial traffic stop was invalid because the arresting officer used a Decatur Genesis radar gun at a time when questions had been raised about its accuracy.

The state police corporal who arrested Losito testified that the gun was working fine.

The judge did not indicate when he would rule in the matter.

State police officials say the problems with the gun are being exaggerated and overblown by the media.

An independent study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh School of Engineering concluded that while the radar unit occasionally registered false readings because of interference, they worked adequately in the field when pointing at moving cars.

In a separate lawsuit, Shingara has claimed his job was threatened for speaking out about problems with the units.

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