

## DA admits wrong guy arrested

He was jailed for 22 months in attempted killing of girl, 11

by Dave Racher

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Eric Orengo sat in a prison cell and prayed — for 22 months.

He prayed that some day he would be cleared of a crime he did not commit and be reunited with his young daughter.

Orengo's prayers were answered, his lawyer, W. Fred Harrison Jr., said yesterday.

Assistant District Attorney Jerome Teresinski went before Common Pleas Judge William J. Mezzeola and said an investigation had disclosed that Orengo was innocent.

"The wrong guy was charged" with shooting and nearly killing 11-year-old Nadya Aviles, and wounding two others July 1, 1999, at Hancock and Cambria streets, said Teresinski.

Orengo's mother, Margarita, and sister, Karen, tearfully watched yesterday's proceedings.

Police said the "right guy" has been charged with the crime.

Alfonso Torrech, 25, also known as Alfonso Torres, of Pike Street near Jasper, was recently extradited from Puerto Rico and charged with the crime. He's awaiting a preliminary hearing.

Orengo, 25, of Kensington, had denied being the gunman since his arrest, his attorney said.

"I don't know anything about the shooting," Orengo said. "I wasn't anywhere near the place that it happened."

At least two witnesses thought Orengo had been the man who fired an assault rifle into a crowd of people in the early evening.

The witnesses picked out Orengo's police photo, then identified him as the gunman at his preliminary hearing.

Orengo was held in prison to await trial.

"He could have gotten over 100 years," said Harrison, who praised the district attorney's office and the East Detective Division for helping to clear Orengo of attempted murder, aggravated assault and related charges. Harrison said the DA's office arranged for Orengo to take a lie-detector test, "which he passed."

"He knew it would help to clear his name," said Harrison.

The DA's office and police reopened the case after getting information that Torrech had been the shooter.

"Our job is to seek justice, not get convictions at all costs," said Teresinski. "This office is concerned with all victims in every crime, and getting the right person for every crime." ■

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