

2 charged in theft of \$45,000 from store safe

By Ben Rubin

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EAST HARTFORD — Two men were arrested on a warrant Saturday in connection with a \$45,000 nighttime heist at the Burlington Coat Factory store in December, which police say was an inside job.

The two, Raul "Pookie" Robles, 24, of Hartford, and Philip Garcia, 35, of New Britain, turned themselves in at the police station, and were released on \$250,000 bonds, police said.

They were each charged with first-degree larceny, third-degree burglary, and conspiracy to commit both crimes. Robles and Garcia are scheduled to appear in Manchester Superior Court May 31.

In the Dec. 17 robbery, police said, they responded to a burglar alarm at the store, at 940 Silver Lane, around 1 a.m., finding the store safe opened and emptied, papers and baskets strewn around the office, and phone lines disconnected.

Police believe robbers entered the store through a second-floor window, using a ladder that was there.

One of the robbers kept his cell phone on speaker as a male voice relayed the safe's combination

numbers to him, police said. The alarm system recorded the conversation, and led police to believe a store employee was involved in the crime.

Store managers quickly and emphatically identified one of the voices on the recording as Douglas "Anthony" Garofalo, 25, of Bloomfield, according to police. He had been fired from the store in November, after working there for about a year.

As a department manager, he was privy to the safe combination, which had not been changed in 11 years.

Garofalo was arrested in February on charges related to the robbery.

Using Garofalo's cell phone records, police said, they uncovered multiple calls the night of the robbery between Garofalo, Garcia, and Robles.

Garofalo also gave police a written statement, acknowledging that the three men executed the robbery, police said.

Garofalo met the other two men through friends and was offered \$15,000 to help in the theft, police said. Garcia and Robles were acquaintances for about a year.