



A former BP engineer accused of deleting text messages after the Gulf oil spill and ensuing investigation pleaded guilty Friday to lesser charges and avoided prison time.

Kurt Mix has been fighting an obstruction charge for more than three years. In federal court on Friday, he pleaded guilty to intentionally causing damage without authorization to a protected computer. Prosecutors suggested no prison time for Mix, and a judge sentenced him to six months of probation.

Mix had been part of a BP team trying to stop an underwater gusher of oil that followed the Deepwater Horizon explosion. In October 2010, about six months after the spill, he deleted text messages he had exchanged with a contractor during the spill, prosecutors said.

At a 2013 trial, he was acquitted on one obstruction charge and convicted on another. But he won a new trial on that conviction because of juror misconduct. According to court records, the jury forewoman told deadlocked fellow jurors that she had heard something outside of the courtroom that increased her confidence in voting guilty.

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