

# THE BALTIMORE SUN

## **Girl, 14, who said she was raped at mall, recants story**

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A 14-year-old girl told Howard County police she was raped Wednesday night at The Mall in Columbia, then recanted her story yesterday - after two men had been arrested and charged in the alleged attack.

The men, both 23, were charged with first-degree rape; conspiracy to commit rape; first-, third- and fourth-degree sex offenses; sodomy; unnatural and perverted sexual practice; second-degree assault; and making a false statement to an officer.

Last night, however, police said the false statement appeared to have been made by the girl.

"It appears it was an outright lie at this point," said Southern District Lt. Morris Carroll.

The charges will be dropped, he said, but only one of the men will be released from the Howard County Detention Center by today. The other is wanted on an Anne Arundel County warrant for violating probation and will remain in custody, Carroll said.

According to the charging documents filed before the story was recanted, the girl told of two men calling her name about 8:15 p.m. Wednesday when she and a friend were in The Mall in Columbia. The victim told police she did not recognize the men, but that they asked her how old she was and followed her around the mall.

The girl said the men grabbed her when she wandered away from her friend while the friend was using a telephone. She said they dragged her into a restroom in JC Penney.

She was apparently found there, partially nude, by a JC Penney employee after the mall had closed for the evening, and claimed that the two men had fled with her clothes.

Police said her clothes were found later in a mall elevator, but exactly what happened remained a mystery last night.

The teen, after telling her initial story, was taken to Howard County General Hospital for an examination, and was interviewed by police. That evening, police issued a search bulletin based on the girl's description, and an officer stopped two men in a car on Twin Rivers Road near Wilde Lake Village Center.

The men gave the officer phony names at first. They later gave their correct names, after the girl identified the pair as the men who raped her, police said earlier yesterday.

But last night during further interviews, the lieutenant said, she told investigators that the men in custody did not assault her.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2002-08-16-0208160221-story.html>