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An Ex-Officer Admits Attack On Another

By DAVID KOCIENIEWSKI OCT. 9, 1996

A former transit police officer pleaded guilty yesterday to a misdemeanor charge of assaulting a female officer who had counseled him during his recovery from a 1994 shooting.

In the plea bargain agreement, felony charges against the former officer, Desmond Robinson, were dropped, including counts of assault, sodomy and attempted rape.

In agreeing to the deal, which will spare Mr. Robinson from jail time, prosecutors and Justice Laura Vistacion-Lewis of State Supreme Court in Manhattan decided against the request of the victim that the case go to trial.

"I am once again being made a victim," she said during the court hearing yesterday, stopping several times to stifle tears. "It is extremely important that he acknowledges what he did to me and apologizes for the suffering he caused me and those close to me to insure that he never again victimizes another woman."

The charges stem from a night of bar-hopping in SoHo on May 2. First, a pedestrian phoned 911 to report that a man, Mr. Robinson, was forcing himself on a female officer on the street. One witness said Mr. Robinson took the female officer's gun and threatened a passer-by.

When patrol cars arrived, however, she told the responding officers that everything was under control.

But the female officer said that several hours later, Mr. Robinson attacked her while they sat in his car near Mercer and Houston Streets, sodomizing her, pummeling her and attempting to rape her. Mr. Robinson contended they had only consensual sex.

An assistant Manhattan district attorney, Lisa Friel, said that she believed that Officer Robinson had attacked the female officer. But she said she agreed to the plea deal because she did not think the victim's testimony would stand up at trial because she had changed her version of events and had drunk so much alcohol that evening that she could not recall details.

For example, Ms. Friel said, the woman, who is married, repeatedly denied having consensual sex with Mr. Robinson in the restroom of a SoHo restaurant earlier in the evening, even though several patrons witnessed the incident.

"I must say, and I do so reluctantly," Ms. Friel said, "that in all my years of experience working with sexual assault victims, I have never met a less candid individual who for months denied obvious facts."

Mr. Robinson's lawyer, Brian O'Dwyer, said the deal confirmed his contention that the charges were groundless. As part of yesterday's agreement, Mr. Robinson will receive three years' probation and psychiatric counseling.

Mr. Robinson, who is black, became a symbol of the racial divisions in the force when he was shot in 1994 by a white officer who mistook him for a criminal. The officer, Peter Del-Debbio, was convicted of second-degree assault, dismissed from the department and sentenced to five years' probation.