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Former Army Man Allegedly Rapes, Assaults Exotic Dancer After Offering Her a Ride Home

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Mugshot of AbdulGhaffar Abiff. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A former member of the army has been accused of sexually assaulting an exotic dancer who he offered a ride home from work.

AbdulGhaffar Abiff is charged with first-degree rape, first-degree unlawful sexual contact, third-degree assault and simple assault.

The charges stem from an alleged incident on the morning of February 6th. According to the alleged victim, she first observed an unidentified male while she was on stage dancing and later thanked him for a tip. She told police that he bought her a drink and later offered a ride home. However, based on her account, while en route to her residence the man made a detour.

The woman said that while in the vehicle she and the man argued and he stopped and told her to get out. He allegedly made several sexual advances towards her and at some point he began to strangle her with both hands. The woman recounted that she attempted to fight back, but the man moved towards her aggressively and allegedly raped her. She told police that she was able to escape and headed to a gas station where she was assisted by a stranger.

After making a report to law enforcement, police made arrangements for the alleged victim to receive medical attention. According to the probable cause fact sheet, the medical professional who attended to her stated that there were no visible signs of sexual assault found during the examination. The physician's assistant also stated that the victim told her that she and the man had consensual sex earlier that evening. However, when police questioned the alleged victim the following day, she denied making that statement to the medical professional, affirming that she had never had consensual sex with the man.

According to the fact sheet, the woman was later able to identify AbdulGhaffar Abiff based on a photo from a now deactivated Instagram account. Surveillance footage obtained by police showed the alleged victim leaving the parking lot of the club with Abiff. Following investigations, Abiff presented himself to the Criminal Investigation Bureau on February 17th, as per a request by police.

At an advisement hearing on Wednesday, Assistant V.I. Attorney General Brenda Scales asked that bail remain as set in the amount of \$75,000. Attorney Andy Johnson however requested that the defendant be released on his own recognizance. Johnson stated that apart from a prior arrest for underaged drinking while stationed in South Korea, Abiff has an "otherwise spotless record." He further asserted that there was no evidence of a crime being committed, apart from the weight of the victim's words, which Johnson described as "no good." Johnson highlighted that the victim appeared to give conflicting statements to police and the medical examiner, suggesting that she "could not get her story straight." He told the court that to hold a man who served his country honorably based on "dubious words," was "going too far." In his statements, the attorney noted that Abiff had been stationed in several locations, even providing hurricane relief to Haiti before he was honorably discharged from the army this year.

After affirming that the defense's arguments were best suited for trial, judge Paula Norkaitis concluded that Abiff can secure his release by posting 10 percent of the \$75,000 bail. He will be released into the third-party custody of a relative and must abide by a 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily curfew while the matter is pending. He has also been ordered to stay away from the club where he allegedly met the victim and to maintain a minimum distance of 40 feet from her at all times. Additionally, the defendant has been prohibited from having any contact with the woman whether that be directly or indirectly through third parties.