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Victim in Orlando cop's rape case claims harassment, asks for external review

Roderick Johnson, a veteran officer with a checkered past, has retired since his arrest.

January 4, 2013 | By Jeff Weiner, Orlando Sentinel

As former Orlando police Officer Roderick Johnson awaits trial, accused of raping a woman while on duty, his alleged victim says she's being harassed by police and has requested an external investigation.

Through a lawyer, the woman has asked the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to intervene, alleging police have engaged in repeated, intimidating contact with her over prosecutors' objections.

"She feels that she's been harassed ... that they are essentially trying to make this go away and make her go away," said Whitney Boan, the woman's Orlando lawyer.

Orlando police, however, say they're taking the charges against their officer seriously and are simply doing their due diligence.

"We're in the middle of an investigation here ... and it's not completed yet," Deputy Chief Rob Pigman said. "It's not going to be wrapped up for a while because we're not going to rush."

Meanwhile, the woman, who says Johnson had unprotected sex with her in a police substation, is now pregnant. Though no testing has been done, according to her attorney, the woman says only two men could be the father: her boyfriend or Johnson.

The timing leaves open two startling possibilities: that Johnson may have impregnated an arrested woman while on duty or that she was already pregnant when the alleged sexual battery occurred.

Johnson, 44, has retired since his arrest and would not comment when reached by phone Friday. He has denied having sex with the alleged victim.

Questioned repeatedly

The woman was arrested Oct. 16 after Johnson discovered the vehicle she was driving had been reported stolen. She says Johnson took her to a substation, had sex with her on a desk and gave her \$40 before taking her to jail. The woman says that though the sex was not forcible, Johnson had suggested she could face additional charges if she didn't cooperate with him.

The 22-year-old woman, whom the Orlando Sentinel is not naming because she is identified as the victim in a sexual battery, reported the allegations against Johnson on Oct. 21 after she began experiencing symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease, records show.

Records show that the woman was interviewed twice by an Orlando detective and also gave a written statement. Though she had been arrested on a third-degree-felony charge, the woman was not represented by an attorney during the interviews.

Police later forwarded their case to the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office, and sexual-battery charges were filed Dec. 3. On Dec. 10, police once again interviewed the victim, according to her attorney, this time for an internal-affairs review.

This week, Boan sent a scathing letter to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement on behalf of her client, criticizing the actions of Orlando police and asking for the external agency to independently review

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the rape case.

Boan writes that prosecutors had asked police, prior to Dec. 10, to cease questioning the victim. Instead, Boan's letter states, OPD investigators picked the woman up in an agency vehicle and once again questioned her in detail, including "whether or not she had told the truth in her prior statements."

Pigman told the Sentinel that while the woman was "fully welcome" to have a lawyer at the interviews, police don't usually offer legal counsel to the victim in a case. He said detectives were investigating Johnson, not her.

Felt 'threatened' by OPD

The woman said she already feared she was being targeted by police when, during an argument with her boyfriend outside a 7-Eleven store Dec. 11, officers intervened and arrested the boyfriend.

In a report, the arresting officer said the boyfriend appeared he "was about to punch [her] in the face." The boyfriend was arrested on an aggravated-battery charge.

In an affidavit Dec. 17, the woman asked the state to drop her boyfriend's charge, saying she never felt threatened by him.

"I did, however, feel threatened by the Orlando Police Department," the affidavit states. Within days, the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office dropped the charge.

Pigman said he'd been told the Dec. 11 arrest was coincidental. He said that it's "quite common" to make an arrest despite a domestic-violence victim's objections.

However, the victim's attorney says nothing about OPD's handling of the rape case has been commonplace.

"I have NO idea why someone within the Orlando Police Department ... would not have immediately recognized the GROSS appearance of impropriety and ... inherent conflict of interest in OPD's conducting its own internal investigation of this incident ..." Boan's FDLE letter states.

An FDLE spokesman said the agency had received the letter and was reviewing it. Pigman said his agency would cooperate with FDLE but "we've demonstrated time and time again that we're able to police our own."

Officer's checkered past

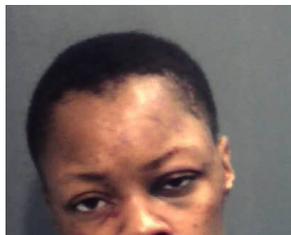
Records show Johnson has repeatedly been the subject of scrutiny and often discipline.

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