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Lawrence police officer raped woman while on duty last Friday, police allege

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By John R. Ellement, Globe staff

A veteran Lawrence police officer is facing rape charges and has lost his job after he allegedly kidnapped a woman off a Lawrence street and repeatedly sexually assaulted her while on duty and in his uniform.

Kevin Sledge was arrested in Pelham, NH earlier today on charges of rape, kidnapping and indecent assault and battery. He agreed to return to Massachusetts. This evening, Sledge is at Lawrence General Hospital undergoing a medical evaluation, said his attorney, Ronald Ranta.

The attorney said he was not certain what symptoms prompted the hospital visit. Depending on his condition, Ranta said Sledge will be arraigned at the hospital or in Lawrence District Court Wednesday.

IN a statement, Ranta defended Sledge. "At this time, we have not been provided with any investigative reports of what Officer Sledge is alleged to have done, or to whom," Ranta said in the statement. "It is our desire to expeditiously gather all the facts and vigorously defend Officer Sledge's innocence."

Lawrence Police Chief John Romero outlined the allegations against the 46-year-old Sledge, who has been on the force for 15 years.

Romero said while on duty and assigned to the booking room early Sept. 26 Sledge left his post, drove in his private car into a Lawrence neighborhood and picked up an apparently inebriated woman.

With the woman in his personal car, he drove back to the station and parked in a nearby lot and returned to work. For about the next 90 minutes, Romero said, Sledge left the station, went to his car and periodically sexually assaulted the woman.

After getting a cell phone call around 4 a.m., a girlfriend of the woman came to the police station to pick the woman up. Sledge, according to Romero, told the girlfriend she was sleeping it off in his car and to come back in an hour.

The woman returned and the alleged victim told her what had happened. The two women immediately notified Sledge's supervisors and a both a civil and criminal investigation began, Romero said.

He said Sledge has been fired by Mayor Michael Sullivan but is entitled under civil service law to a termination hearing, which is now set for Oct. 6.

