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Former Provo police officer Jeffery Westerman pleads guilty to reduced sexual abuse charge

By Sam Penrod, Deseret News

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Jeffery Westerman, right, appears in 4th District Court with his attorney.

Mark Johnston

Summary

PROVO — A Provo police officer has taken a plea deal involving a case of sexual assault while he was on duty and in uniform.

PROVO — A Provo police officer has taken a plea deal involving a case of sexual assault while he was on duty and in uniform.

Jeffery Westerman entered a guilty plea to reduced charges of attempted forcible sexual abuse, a third degree felony, and misdemeanor obstruction of justice. The judge ordered him to undergo a mental evaluation before his sentencing hearing Feb. 3.

Westerman, 33, was originally charged with second-degree felony forcible sexual abuse and third-degree felony obstruction of justice. He initially entered a not guilty plea in October.

The charges stem from a minor traffic accident near 300 South and University Avenue on July 22 that Westerman investigated. Two cars were originally involved, but he eventually told the other driver to leave, according to court documents. He performed a sobriety test on the alleged victim, who appeared to be

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Westerman then drove the woman's car to a nearby parking lot, where he searched it and then told her she would be arrested for felony charges unless she lifted up her shirt for him. The 29-year-old woman told police she complied because she didn't want to go to jail. The next day, she reported it to the Utah County Sheriff's Office.

According to the sheriff's office, Westerman "used his position to request sexual favors in exchange for not filing criminal charges."

Prosecutors said Westerman fondled the woman twice.

Prosecutors say the victim has had a difficult time since this happened.

"It's been quite stressful, as you can imagine, going up against a former police officer in kind of a he-said, she-said thing," said Craig Johnson, deputy Utah County attorney.

During the course of the investigation, Westerman "provided false statements" to deputies. Video surveillance from nearby businesses and statements from witnesses substantiated the victim's story.

Westerman told investigators he was at the accident scene for only 10 minutes. Surveillance video, however, shows he was on scene for more than 50 minutes. The video also showed him driving the woman's car to a nearby parking lot and searching it, just as she reported.

Westerman, who began working for Provo in 2006, was fired from the department after an internal review of the incident. He remains free but will face up to five years in prison.

He will also be on the state's sex offender registry for the next 10 years, and his career as a law enforcement officer is permanently over.

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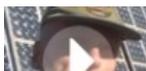
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