



News

Woman files claim against city, officer accused of sexual assault



Written by

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SAN DIEGO — A woman has filed a \$5.5 million claim against the city of San Diego, saying she was unjustly arrested on suspicion of drunken driving in December by an officer who offered to let her go if she performed sexual favors.

The document, filed last week, names former officer Anthony Arevalos, an 18-year department veteran who was fired on April 14 after he was charged in San Diego Superior Court with 18 felony counts, including sexual battery, assault under color of authority and receiving a bribe. The charges relate to five victims on five separate dates.

Arevalos, 40, has pleaded not guilty.

According to the claim, the woman is seeking \$5 million in general damages and \$500,000 in economic damages against the city for assault, battery, false imprisonment and emotional distress. A claim is usually a precursor to a lawsuit.

She contends that the city and its employees, including Police Chief William Lansdowne and Arevalos, failed to provide proper training to department officers and discriminated against the woman because of her race. She is black.

Gina Coburn, spokeswoman for the City Attorney's Office, said the matter is under review and that the office had no comment.

It appears that the woman who filed the claim is not one of the alleged victims named in the criminal case. The San Diego Union-Tribune is not identifying her because she has made allegations of sexual assault.

According to the document, the woman contends that her civil rights were violated when Arevalos stopped her on Dec. 5 on Seventh and Island streets in downtown San Diego and filed a false police report, causing charges to be filed against her.

Her lawyer, Alexis Galindo of Long Beach, said in an interview that Arevalos repeatedly asked the woman for sexual favors in exchange for her release, but she did not comply.

Galindo said prosecutors dropped the DUI charges against his client.

The District Attorney's Office has charged Arevalos with several felonies. He is accused of groping or otherwise sexually assaulting women he stopped for various traffic violations in the Gaslamp Quarter between Sept. 29, 2009 and March 8.

A preliminary hearing in Arevalos' case has been scheduled for Monday.

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