



'Desperate husband' tale unfolds in Camp Foster courtroom

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By: David Allen

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A court-martial began here Wednesday for a soldier accused of 11 charges including rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, sodomy, adultery and housebreaking.

Army Spc. Luis Bonilla, 38, assigned to the 505th Quartermaster Battalion, 10th Area Support Group at Torii Station, pleaded not guilty to all of the charges at a hearing Monday and sat passively through most of the first day of trial on Wednesday before a panel of four enlisted servicemembers and three officers.

The charges stem from three separate, unrelated incidents during a two-year period on Okinawa and at a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Base in Hokkaido.

Lead defense counsel Capt. James Culp characterized the charges as a “tree of lies” in his opening statement.

“This case is about a whole bunch of fiction,” he said. “What you end up with is three good stories based upon false statements.”

The “lie seed,” Culp said, was an accusation that Bonilla tried to rape another Army specialist on Feb. 1 while deployed to Camp Higashi-Chitose in Hokkaido. The woman, 30, testified Bonilla groped her in the stairwell of the barracks they were staying in and fondled her while masturbating.

During the investigation into the woman’s accusation, two soldiers working on Torii Station told a legal clerk separately, in April and May, that Bonilla’s rape charge was unsurprising because in past he’d also “hit” on them. But when the two Army specialists were briefed about testifying, they alleged Bonilla did more.

One woman claimed Bonilla broke into her home on Kadena Air Base after a night of drinking with her and friends in Okinawa City on Nov. 30, 2004, and raped her while her husband was at work. She also accused him of committing sodomy on her.

The second woman said Bonilla sexually assaulted her some time during November 2003 on Torii Station.

Those accusations caused prosecutors to withdraw the original charge and resulted in the charges being heard this week.

Bonilla, who is married, also is charged with sodomy, two counts of giving false statements to an Army investigator and trying to influence an alleged victim's testimony in the Hokkaido incident by sending her an e-mail.

In his opening statement, Capt. James Dupre, the prosecutor, said the case was "a story that has three victims with a single story — a story of a desperate husband."

With Bonilla's wife sitting two rows back in the courtroom's spectator section, Dupre called Bonilla a sexual predator "who appears as the desperate husband."

Wednesday's chief witness was the 30-year-old woman who said Bonilla assaulted her in the barracks stairwell in Hokkaido on Feb. 1. She said it actually was the second time Bonilla molested her during the exercise but he'd apologized and she'd forgiven him for the first incident, eight days previously in his van.

The second incident still haunts her, she said. It was early morning and she was packing to prepare to return to her base at Fort Lewis, Wash., when she saw Bonilla in the hall and warned him not to be on the women's floor. She said she walked over to him and spoke softly so as not to waken anyone.

Bonilla wanted to talk, she said, so they went into the stairwell, where he started to fondle her. She said she tried to tell him to stop, but he persisted. She said he masturbated while sticking his hand down her pants and prevented her from leaving.

"I tried to keep it to myself as long as possible," she said, her voice starting to break. "I didn't want anyone to know what had happened. I was embarrassed.

"I just wanted to forget," she said, pausing to stifle a sob. "But every day I felt worse. I'd get home and crawl into bed and cry myself to sleep."

She finally reported the incident after speaking with a social worker at Fort Lewis.

During cross-examination, defense attorney Capt. Pia Rogers asked why the woman, who transferred to Darmstadt, Germany, repeatedly has changed her story.

"I was still in shock," the woman said, adding that in time she remembered more details.

Wednesday she said she recalled the incident "just as clear as if it happened this morning."

Under Rogers' cross-examination, the woman said she did not scream during the incident because being seen with Bonilla was too embarrassing and she was worried about her reputation.

“You’re unmarried with two children and you were so scared and worried about your reputation that you didn’t scream for help?” asked Rogers.

“Yes,” the witness said.

“Would you rather be raped or embarrassed?” Rogers asked.

“Neither one,” the woman said.

The case is set to continue through Friday.