

Trooper accused of beating driver, demanding cash

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

The Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. -- A state trooper demanded money from a motorist during a traffic stop, then beat the driver when he said he didn't have the cash, according to a federal lawsuit filed yesterday.

Nana Kyeame, a Canadian citizen and native of Ghana, then spent three days in jail following the traffic stop July 2, 2006, in State College before charges of speeding and resisting arrest were dropped, the lawsuit said.

Mr. Kyeame filed suit in federal district court in Harrisburg against Trooper Nicholas Buchheit seeking unspecified damages, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania. The suit claims Tpr. Buchheit violated Kyeame's civil rights and constitutional rights to reasonable search and seizure and due process.

"Getting your head bashed in and spending three days in the slammer is not, fortunately, the usual punishment for speeding," said Pennsylvania ACLU legal director Witold Walczak, one of Mr. Kyeame's attorneys. "This was such an abuse of power that we could not let it slide."

Attorneys for the state police had yet to see the lawsuit, Tpr. Linette Quinn, a spokeswoman at agency headquarters in Harrisburg, said yesterday. The organization typically does not comment on pending litigation, she said.

Mr. Kyeame and his wife were returning from a funeral in Maryland to their home in Brampton, Ontario, when they were pulled over, Mr. Kyeame's lawyers said.

The suit alleged that Tpr. Buchheit improperly demanded cash from Mr. Kyeame during the arrest to pay for fines and costs related to an alleged speeding violation, and that the trooper refused Mr. Kyeame's request to go to an ATM machine.

With his wife watching, Mr. Kyeame was then hurt after being pulled out of the car, the suit said, and Tpr. Buchheit "pushed the plaintiff onto the ground and assaulted him further."

Mr. Kyeame's lawyers said in the suit their client was repeatedly called a derogatory name during the trip to jail and that he was told to "pray very hard that the incident would not turn ugly."