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Moraga Police, with help from San Francisco P.D., arrest Uber driver

By Sophie Braccini

Recently promoted Moraga Detective Kevin Mooney says that San Francisco Police Department's Special Victims Unit was very helpful in the arrest a 42-year-old Uber driver suspected of sexual battery on a Moraga resident.

The man, identified as Leonid Beker, booked in the county jail in Martinez, was released on bail. Uber removed him from the app.

According to the Moraga police report, on May 26, at approximately 1:03 a.m., Moraga Police Department received a report of a sexual battery that had occurred on Camino Ricardo in Moraga. When officers responded, they discovered that a female victim had taken an Uber ride to Moraga from Oakland. The victim's account of the incident is that when the Uber vehicle reached Moraga, the Uber driver stopped before reaching the destination, got into the backseat of the vehicle with the victim and committed sexual battery.

According to the California penal code, any person who touches an intimate part of another person while that person is unlawfully restrained by the accused or an accomplice, and if the touching is against the will of the person touched and is for the purpose of sexual arousal, sexual gratification, or sexual abuse, is guilty of sexual battery. This crime is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than one year, and by a fine not exceeding \$2,000, or by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three or four years, and by a fine not exceeding \$10,000. Mooney said that both a misdemeanor and felony charges were made at the district attorney's office.

Several sources of information allowed the MPD to identify the driver as Beker, including a traffic camera installed by the city of Orinda at the border with Moraga, as well as the victim's camera. Mooney says that when the SFPD heard of the case they immediately understood its serious nature and the officers were very accommodating and helpful. As soon as Beker was located, Mooney drove to San Francisco and arrested him. The detective said that Beker was cooperative. He was taken to the county jail in Martinez - Moraga does not have a jail - where he stayed until a \$50,000 bail was posted and he was released.

Andrew Hasbun, spokesperson for Uber, said that what the rider reported was deeply troubling and that the driver was removed from Uber as soon as the company became aware of the accusation. Hasbun added that Uber was supporting the police investigation and that this driver had had no previous feedback of this nature. The spokesperson also provided the screening policy used by Uber. That company indicates that it has a zero tolerance policy regarding sexual misconduct.

Uber's screening policy in California is mandatory. Beyond driving records that go back seven years, every person who wants to drive with Uber undergoes a national, state and local-level criminal history check that screens a series of national, state, and local databases including the US Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website, the PACER database, and several different databases used to identify suspected terrorists. This research is subcontracted to Checkr, a third-party background check provider.

Mooney said that the investigation is continuing and that if other people have information they should contact him at (925) 888-7056. He expects the results to be presented to the district attorney in the near future. The conclusion of the case will take several more months, depending on a number of factors, including the accused's plea.

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