

State drops charges against Christopher Dukes, former CCSU official accused of assaulting wife, holding police at bay

By DAVID OWENS | HARTFORD COURANT

Had the case been tried, there's no question in our minds that Mr. Dukes would have prevailed as to those claims involving his wife," Pattis said. The outcome was less certain on the other charges, he said. As to the claims involving ... breach of peace, Mr. Dukes believes he was being set up and would have to persuade a jury what it's like to be black in 2019 with armed police officers demanding that you leave the safety and security of your home," Pattis said.



Chris Dukes, the former director of student conduct at Central Connecticut State University, left, appears in court with his then-attorney, Marina Green, in April 2018.

Prosecutor Vicki Melchiorre said she was dropping the charges because the victim does not want Dukes to go to jail for the sake of their children. His lawyer, Norm Pattis, had filed a speedy trial motion

and the case was called in for trial on Thursday. Dukes has turned down a variety of plea offers, including one that would have ultimately resulted in the dismissal of the charges, and has maintained his innocence.

After Melchiorre said she would not prosecute Dukes, Pattis asked Hartford Superior Court Judge Laura F. Baldini to dismiss the charges, which she did. That effectively eliminates any public record of Dukes' arrest or prosecution.

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The charges against Dukes, 47, included two counts of first-degree kidnapping, and single counts of second-degree strangulation, third-degree assault, second-degree threatening and breach of peace.

"It is clear to me that Mr. Dukes is incapable of taking any responsibility for his actions on the night in question, even though he's on tape telling the police what to do, what not to do and holding them at bay with a loaded gun," Melchiorre told the judge in explaining her decision to nolle the case. "It is also clear to me that he is continuing to try to control the victim by forcing a trial in this matter and that he intends to use the trial as a bully pulpit from which to vilify his wife for wanting out of her marriage and then to accuse her of cheating on him."

Melchiorre told the judge that Dukes "wants to portray himself

as the victim and I will not enable him to do so. He doesn't seem to understand that this is 2019 and he doesn't get to control his wife."

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Christine Dukes filed for divorce from Christopher Dukes in May 2018 and the case is scheduled to go to trial in February. Family court rather than criminal court is the appropriate venue for the matter, Melchiorre said, and Dukes "can engage in whatever vitriol he wishes."

Pattis thanked the state "for doing justice in this case" and said that he disagreed with Melchiorre's comments.

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demanding that you leave the safety and security of your home," Pattis said.

Dukes was also fearful that he was the victim of a hoax police call known as swatting, Pattis said.

"We believe [his wife] harbored a hope and desire that police would eliminate him, thus making possible for her a new life with someone else," he said.

Outside court, Melchiorre said a guilty verdict would have likely resulted in jail and Christine Dukes did not want that.

"The kids love their father," she said. "The victim was reasonable here. I hope Mr. Dukes can learn to be reasonable."

Before his arrest, Dukes had no criminal record, no substance abuse issues and had a good job, she said. "We try to give people the benefit of the doubt," Melchiorre said. "We hope they realize they're getting a break and they act accordingly."

After his arrest, Dukes was suspended from his position as director of student conduct at CCSU in New Britain. He was terminated in December 2018, although the termination is on appeal. The university has hired someone to replace Dukes. ■