

Elderly Long Island man says video shows wrongful arrest

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Stacey Sager reports on the allegations of excessive force.

 By Stacey Sager

Wednesday, February 07, 2018

BALDWIN, Long Island (WABC) -- There allegations of excessive force by police on Long Island after a 72-year-old veteran filed a lawsuit claiming two officers "pushed him, grab him by his neck, hurled him down four steps and body slammed him to the ground."

He was arrested for allegedly assaulting the officers, but those charges were dropped. And the incident was caught on camera.

Robert Besedin is a 72-year-old mechanic and Air Force veteran who says he's always been a law abiding citizen, but the past year hasn't been easy. Besedin was charged with felony assault against two Nassau police officers, and

it wasn't until this week that those charges were dismissed.

Now, Besedin is suing the Nassau County Police Department, the Nassau County District Attorney, and the two officers involved in the incident, which happened on February 7, 2017, outside his Baldwin home.

"If I didn't have the video, nobody would believe me," Besedin said.

At a news conference with his attorney, Frederick Brewington, they described the accusations in sworn statements made by Nassau police Officers Stephen Beckwith and John Mantovani. The officers had accused Besedin of resisting arrest, stating that that he "violently flailed his arms, kicked, screamed, and pushed Officer Mantovani down four steps" after a confrontation on Besedin's front porch.

But Besedin's lawyer says investigators never bothered to check the surveillance video, which shows a much different story. In the video, you see an officer twist Besedin by his neck and toss *him* down the stairs. You also see an officer shove him a second time after he was cuffed. Besedin spent several days in lockup, with 85 percent hearing loss, because his hearing aids were knocked out.

"These officers lied," Brewington said. "And there's no question they lied."

It is unclear what brought cops to Besedin's home in the first place. Sources tell Eyewitness News Besedin had called 911 at least 18 times in the three hours before the incident, shouting obscenities.

"There's a question of how all those calls were made," Brewington said. "We believe that a good number of them were made accidentally, kind of what we refer to as 'butt calls.'"

Neither police nor the District Attorney's Office would comment on the pending litigation, but sources do say the police are conducting an Internal Affairs investigation.

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