

Police: Teen lied about rape to hide truancy

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A 13-year-old girl looking for a way to cover her absence from school lied about being kidnapped and raped by as many as 15 men, police said Thursday.

Police confronted the girl with their doubts about her grisly story of threats, torture and rape and she admitted she made it up, Atlanta Police Chief Eldrin Bell said.

"We have several other young witnesses who substantiate it that she skipped school, and they did stay away all day, and I think it is evidence of a greater domestic problem at home," Bell said. "We're turning the results of this over to our Youth Squad who will work with authorities to correct some of these problems in the home and assist the parent in getting this little lady back on track."

The girl reported the attack Monday afternoon and the ensuing publicity had frantic parents rushing to pick up their children from Sylvan Hills Middle School, which the girl attended.

She told police she got off the school bus about 8 a.m.

and left the campus at 1461 Sylvan Road S.W. before classes to go to a convenience store. She claimed she was forced into a car by three men and taken to an apartment where she was raped by up to 15 men and then pushed from a car and dumped out about 4 p.m.

She will not be charged with making a false report, Bell said.

"We certainly don't want this to measure as an indictment of this young person, but to help us further understand this whole phenomenon of gang violence and rape going on in our city today. As the media has reported in the past, gangs have tortured and ... I think this is having a decided impact on our young people."

Two teenage girls were kidnapped, tortured, raped and killed in August, allegedly by a gang police have called "Doom."

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"Some of the evidence that she gave us in this case mirror some of the problems we've had in other cases such as the Doom cases," Bell said.

A medical report, issued shortly after she reported the attack, said there was no physical evidence to support her claims of rape or of being thrown from a car, Bell said.

"The inconsistencies started with suspicions, coupled with the medical report, coupled with interviews of other people including the bus driver gave us a clear indication that something was awry," Bell said. "After getting statements from her little companions we were able to bring her in and confront her with this and she told us what we believe to be the truth. She and two other girls she was with just played hooky. They went Downtown and other places."

"Unfounded" complaints make up 10 percent to 15 percent of the volume of rapes reported, and most come from adults, Bell said.

"It's quite a problem," he said. "Citywide, 44 percent of those cases we get drugs are involved, another significantly

high percent alcohol is involved and another percent is prostitution or people who do not come back after the initial report — who are not willing to cooperate. We have discovered in the past that in many instances [prostitutes] are trying to use the system to leverage their ability to collect. We're not going to do that."

The girl was remorseful, police said.

"After we talked with her mother and let them talk to each other, then she understood the ramifications of what she had done," said Detective Richard Price.

John Goodlett, principal of Sylvan Hills Middle School, said counseling will be made available to the girl.

"We haven't given a lot of thought to punishment yet," Goodlett said. "I would think the student's going through quite a lot of embarrassment now, so we're focusing our attention on helping the student."

And Bell said he has written a letter to Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Lester Butts volunteering ranking officers to counsel problem students. He said he would step up truancy and curfew enforcements.