

# Alaska Dispatch News

Crime & Courts

## DNA leads to Anchorage man's conviction in 2014 sexual assault

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An Anchorage man has been convicted of sexually assaulting a female passenger more than two years ago, based on DNA evidence that exonerated another man.

Anchorage District Attorney Clint Campion's office said Asad Nur, 31, was found guilty Monday of first-degree sexual assault and second-degree assault. The jury verdict followed five days of testimony.

According to an Anchorage detective's affidavit, the victim said she met Nur at a bar on Sept. 5, 2014, and he suggested they both take a taxi to another bar. Instead, the taxi took them to his apartment.

"Once inside the apartment, Nur dragged the woman to his room, strangled her with one hand and sexually assaulted her," prosecutors wrote in a press release. "Nur then let go of her neck, told her he would call her another taxi, and told her not to tell anyone what happened. The woman called 911 shortly after the incident but was not initially able to identify the defendant."

Assistant district attorney Gustaf Olson, who prosecuted the case, said Wednesday the victim, who immediately reported the attack, was assessed by a sexual assault specialist. DNA samples taken during the investigation were submitted to the state Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory in Anchorage.

Nur had called the second cab for the victim under an alias, Olson said. Police recorded a phone conversation on the day of the assault between the victim and Nur, who hadn't yet been identified by name, when she called the phone number he had used to request the cab.

"She said she wanted to talk about last night and he said, 'Oh yeah, from the bar,'" Olson said. "She said, 'You hurt me, you forced me;' he said, 'Oh, no' — she said, 'You're saying we didn't have sex?' and he hung up on her."

Olson said the case was complicated when the victim initially identified the assailant from a photo lineup as Nur's neighbor — a man with the same build and physical description as Nur, down to a similar facial scar. The neighbor was considered a possible suspect until May 2015, when DNA test results from the state crime lab ruled him out as the assailant.

In September 2015, court records show, Nur pleaded no contest to and was convicted on an unrelated assault charge in Anchorage. Under state law, Olson said, the offense allowed authorities to take a DNA sample from Nur



and enter it into the Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, a statewide database of DNA samples collected in part from people arrested or convicted of certain crimes.

Staff at the crime lab told police in February 2016 that they had found a CODIS hit linking Nur's DNA to the sample from the sexual assault. Olson said APD detectives tracked down Nur, whose first language is Somali, and asked him about the case during two October interviews in Anchorage. Officers requested a Somali interpreter for the second interview. Nur had worked as a taxi driver in Anchorage at some point, Olson said.

"When they caught up with him, he made adamant denials and he said, 'You should take my DNA,' " Olson said. "I think he didn't understand that fundamentally, DNA doesn't change over time; it's not like your temperature."

Following the interviews, Olson said, an arrest warrant for Nur was issued on Nov. 3. In December, DNA testing on the sample volunteered by Nur confirmed the CODIS match against the sexual-assault sample.

Olson said Nur's credibility at trial was undermined by a recorded outburst at a bail hearing in the case, in which Nur responded to a statement from the victim by saying he didn't know her — contradicting his previous conversation with the victim regarding the night of the assault.

At trial, Olson said, Nur's defense argued that the sex was consensual. The defendant did not testify.

Nur remains in Alaska Department of Corrections custody, pending a June 23 sentencing date. He faces from 20 to 99 years in prison on the sexual assault charges.

**Correction:** An earlier version of this story incorrectly described the circumstances of the assault. While Asad Nur had worked as a taxi driver, he was not driving the victim in a taxi that night. He and the victim were both passengers, according to prosecutors. In addition, the man whom the victim initially identified as her assailant was Nur's neighbor, not the victim neighbor.

#### About this Author

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Chris Klint, a lifelong Alaskan and UAA graduate, covers breaking news in the mornings. He spent more than five years at Anchorage TV station KTUU before joining Alaska Dispatch News.

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