

Deal struck in case involving British Royal Navy officer

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BY KEITH EPPS

An officer in Britain's Royal Navy has reached a deal with Fredericksburg authorities that may salvage his promising military career.

Edmund Whitehead, 22, of Wales, was arrested Aug. 4 after police said he broke into the Fredericksburg Baptist Church during a drunken rampage and caused thousands of dollars worth of damage, including destroying an expensive stained-glass window.

Whitehead, a second lieutenant who was in the country training at Quantico, is charged with three felonies, burglary, destruction of property and assaulting a law enforcement officer.

The latter charge stems from an allegation that Whitehead spit on Officer Dave Riley during his arrest.

On Thursday, Whitehead voluntarily had his bond revoked as part of a deal put together by prosecutor Travis Bird and defense attorney Mark Schamel.

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He will be in the Rappahannock Regional Jail until Tuesday, when he will return to Fredericksburg General District Court to finalize the deal.

In the end, Whitehead will be convicted of two misdemeanors, trespassing and being drunk in public.

Whitehead has already made restitution to the church, and attorneys said neither the church nor Riley were interested in having him convicted of a felony.

According to the evidence, Whitehead and others had come to Quantico to train with their United States military counterparts.

He and fellow officers came to Fredericksburg that night after spending the previous 10 days training in the field.

Whitehead drank too much and ended up getting separated from his friends before going to the church and “acting the fool,” Bird said.

Schamel said Whitehead’s behavior that night was out of character. He said he was a straight-A student in college who had never been in trouble before and was expecting to serve in Afghanistan soon.

“This was an unfortunate situation,” said Schamel, who added that he and Whitehead appreciate the “good judgment” shown by local officials and the church.

Whitehead, who spent several days in jail following his arrest, may still face consequences from the military, attorneys said.

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