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'Dr. Hunter' charged in torture case at Westchester Community College

Shawn Cohen and Jonathan Bandler
spcohen@lohud.com

VALHALLA - An ex-convict is accused of "torturing" young minority men, stripping them naked, whipping them with a belt and inserting pins beneath their fingernails under the ruse that he was training them to become "international security specialists," Westchester County police said.

Larry Bottone — who uses the alias "Dr. Hunter" — was arrested yesterday in one such incident, in which he allegedly whipped a naked man in a locker room at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, police said.

The 52-year-old, who surrendered at county Police Headquarters, was charged with third-degree burglary, a felony, and first-degree hazing, a misdemeanor, among other offenses.

He was arraigned in Greenburgh Town Court and released on \$1,000 bail, pending his next appearance July 15.

Police interviewed two alleged victims, including a 20-year-old Pomona man on whom the charges are based. One of them said Bottone picked him up at the Palisades Center mall in West Nyack.

In the early 1990s, Bottone was a coach and teacher who ran an afterschool tutoring program for minority students in Norwalk, Conn. He was dismissed by the program's board of directors in 1996 when a videotape surfaced showing him whipping and torturing three black teenagers. In one scene, he pretended to be an Afrikaaner torturing a tribesman during an interrogation.

When more videotapes were discovered showing some boys naked while they were being whipped, Bottone was arrested by the FBI and Norwalk police on child pornography and assault charges. He reportedly claimed that he was conducting research to determine how much pain someone could endure when subjected to punishment by an authority figure.

He pleaded guilty and served just under two years in federal prison.

Westchester police said Bottone's actions have gone undetected for years after that.

They said Bottone has been known to frequent shopping malls and colleges in Rockland, Westchester and Connecticut under his alias. He approaches young minority males under the ruse that he believes they are prior students. He then chats up the victims for several hours, inviting them to be interviewed for a scholarship program that he runs, police said.

"Once entered into Bottone's program, the young males are put through rigorous physical and mental tasks, including torture," police stated in a report that claims victims were also bound to tables and

blindfolded, and covered with oil or cold water.

"All victims are under the belief that they must complete these tasks in order to continue in this 'elite' training," police stated.

Police said he utilized colleges for his "training course," but is not officially affiliated with any.

Bottone, who dresses in business attire that enables him to blend in, admits using classrooms and college video equipment for training purposes, although police said he had no permission to be there. When they searched his car, detectives found a red duffel bag containing ropes and other torture equipment, and a faculty parking pass for Southern Connecticut State University that had been stolen in February.

He was also charged with fifth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and third-degree criminal trespass, misdemeanors.

He and his lawyer did not immediately respond to calls for comment.

Patrick Hennessey, a spokesman for Westchester Community College, said he had been notified of the complaint by college security officials.

Asked about Bottone's alleged ability to get into a locker room, Hennessey said: "I will say that we are an open campus... We've never had a problem like this before."

Police asked that anyone who has had contact with Bottone call detectives at 914-864-7916.
