

Man charged with molesting woman on Hawaiian Air flight to Honolulu

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HONOLULU (Hawaii News Now) - 22-year-old Luavalu Seuva'ai pleaded "not guilty" in Federal Court Monday to charges of abusive sexual conduct aboard an aircraft. Special agents from the Honolulu office of the FBI, arrested the American Samoa resident when Hawaiian Airlines flight 456, originating in Manila, Philippines touched down in Honolulu Thursday around noon.

Court affidavits show that Seuva'ai told investigators he thought the woman in the window seat next to him was flirting and that he was just flirting back. "Understanding that this defendant is innocent until proven guilty, it's not the job of the FBI to tell a 22-year-old man to keep his hands to himself," said Special FBI Agent Tom Simon.

The alleged victim told investigators she took some Nyquil cold medicine to sleep when Seuva'ai touched her. She said she brushed off his advances several times, but startled from sleep, she awoke to find his hand under her bra. Pressing her flight attendant call button, the woman was re-seated in another part of the plane. "Fortunately, these cases are very rare but the FBI does get called out about four times a month on different cases where people are misbehaving on aircraft," said Simon.

A U.S. Magistrate Judge released Seuva'ai into the custody of his sister, who lives in Honolulu after paying his 25-thousand dollar bail. Defense attorney, Sean Coutain, said the rest of the story will come out, when his client returns to court on September 7th for a preliminary hearing. "This is a classic case of 'he said, she said' with no witnesses so the only two people who know what happened are the two people involved. It's really early at this point to be jumping to any kinds of conclusions," said Coutain. Abusive sexual contact aboard an aircraft carries a maximum statutory penalty of two years in federal prison.