



Police charge Trump campaign manager with assault

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Police in Jupiter, Florida, released surveillance footage Tuesday that appears to show Donald Trump's campaign manager Corey Lewandowski grabbing Breitbart News reporter Michelle Fields as she tried to ask Trump a question during a March 8 campaign event. Video provided by Jupiter, Florida police.

WASHINGTON — Police charged Donald Trump's campaign manager with simple battery Tuesday as a videotaped **altercation with a reporter** transformed what was another messy campaign sideshow into a criminal court summons. Trump decried the charges.

Jupiter, Florida, police determined that probable cause existed to file a criminal complaint against the Republican front-runner's most trusted political adviser, Corey Lewandowski, for an altercation that took place after a campaign appearance earlier in the month. Police on Tuesday morning issued Lewandowski a notice to appear before a judge on May 4 for the misdemeanor charge, which carries up to a year in jail.

The unexpected development injects a court battle into an already contentious Republican primary season just a week before a high-stakes election in Wisconsin. It came on a day that all five presidential contenders campaigned in the state, overshadowing Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's endorsement of Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders' push to narrow Hillary Clinton's delegate lead.

Speaking to reporters on his airplane in Wisconsin Tuesday, Trump vowed to stand by his campaign manager and lashed out at the young female reporter who conveyed the incident to police.

"How do you know those bruises weren't there before?" the New York businessman charged.

"I'm not going to let a person's life be destroyed," Trump said of Lewandowski. "No jury, in my opinion, would convict a man and destroy a man's life over what you witnessed."

Police charged Lewandowski after reviewing a surveillance video of the incident, obtained from security at the Trump-owned property. Police determined the video shows Lewandowski grabbing Michelle Fields, who worked for Breitbart News at the time, as she tried to ask Trump a question after a March 8 appearance.

The Trump campaign said Lewandowski would plead not guilty and "is completely confident that he will be exonerated."

Trump on Tuesday reversed a previous position that the incident never happened, suggesting instead that Lewandowski was trying to block Fields from "grabbing and asking questions."

"She was grabbing me. Does that mean I'm supposed to file charges against her?" Trump told reporters. He said Fields exaggerated her original statement that Lewandowski "grabbed me tightly by the arm and yanked me down."

The video appears to show him yanking her backward.

Fields weighed in on Twitter: "My story never changed. Seriously, just stop lying."

It's unclear what impact, if any, the news will have on Trump's march toward his party's presidential nomination. Critics cast it as another example of why the brash billionaire would struggle to attract women in a prospective race against Clinton, the Democratic front-runner.

"What Donald Trump has been doing over these last months is inciting violent behavior, aggressive behavior that I think is very dangerous and has resulted in attacks on people at his events including this charge that has now been brought against his campaign manager," Clinton said in La Crosse, Wisc. "I think ultimately the responsibility is Mr. Trump's."

The New York businessman's Republican rivals also seized on the news, which comes a week before a Wisconsin primary contest that could give Trump an insurmountable delegate lead or give his opponents new hope of a contested national convention.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz said the incident is "the consequence of the culture of the Trump campaign — the abusive culture when you have a campaign that is built on personal insults, on attacks and now physical violence."

Cruz asked his senior aide, Rick Tyler, to resign in February for spreading a story that falsely alleged former rival Marco Rubio insulted the Bible.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich said he "probably would suspend somebody" depending on the evidence available.

"When we see things that we think are inappropriate, we take action and that's what I would do," Kasich said.

The incident fueled fresh attacks by anti-Trump groups, who have already been attacking the billionaire for failing to quell violence at his public appearances.

Our Principles PAC has been airing an ad featuring news clips of violence at Trump rallies and playing audio of the GOP front-runner saying of a protester, "I'd like to punch him in the face."

The same ad includes images of Fields' bruised arm.

"The police in Jupiter, Florida, have clearly seen what Donald Trump refuses to acknowledge: his campaign manager battered a woman and caused serious bruising," said Our Principles PAC leader Katie Packer.

In the days after the alleged assault, Trump told CNN that the incident was probably "made up." Campaign spokeswoman Hope Hicks went further at the time, charging in a statement that "not a single camera or reporter of more than 100 in attendance captured the alleged incident."

"Lewandowski grabbed Fields' left arm with his right hand causing her to turn and step back," reads the police report released Tuesday. Fields showed police her left forearm which "appeared to show a grabbing-type injury," according to the investigating officer.

Lewandowski has retained a Florida attorney who said Tuesday there would be no further comment.

Peoples reported in Washington. AP writers Jack Gillum and Chad Day in Washington, Scott Bauer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Todd Richmond in Waukesha, Wisconsin and Kathleen Ronayne in Concord, New Hampshire contributed to this report.