

Cosby charged with sex assault at his mansion

US comedian faces court for first time after years of fighting claims



Accuser: Andrea Constand, pictured in 1987

From **Daniel Bates** in New York

COMEDIAN Bill Cosby has been charged with drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his mansion.

It is the first time the US television star has been charged with an offence – though there have been scores of accusations of sexual assault against him in recent months.

The 78-year-old is accused of attacking Andrea Constand, now 42, at his mansion in 2004. He could face ten years in jail if found guilty.

Cosby, most famous for his wholesome 1980s family sitcom *The Cosby Show*, appeared in court in Philadelphia yesterday and was released on a \$1million (£675,000) bail after a five-minute hearing.

Prosecutors said Miss Constand had been left 'frozen, paralysed and unable to move' after Cosby gave her pills and forced himself on her.

At the time of the alleged offence, she was director of operations at the women's basketball team at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Cosby – who has been married since 1964 – was on the university's board and became Miss Constand's 'mentor' and invited her to his mansion for dinner three times, allegedly touching her inappropriately on her first two visits.

On the third occasion, in January or February 2004, Miss Constand claims Cosby gave her wine and three blue pills. The criminal complaint states that Cosby told her: 'These will make you feel good. The blue ones take the edge off.'

Miss Constand claims she asked Cosby if the pills were herbal, and was told: 'Yes. Down them. Put 'em down. Put them in your mouth.'

Within 20 minutes she claims she had 'blurred vision and difficulty speaking'. She allegedly 'lost all

strength' in her legs, which felt 'rubbery' and like 'jelly'. The complaint said: 'She could not keep her eyes open, was not aware of any sounds, had no sense of time.'

But Miss Constand alleges that, despite her impaired state, she was aware of Cosby sexually assaulting her. The criminal complaint said: 'The victim told investigators she did not consent to any of these actions and was unable to speak or move during the assault.'

According to the complaint, Miss Constand woke at 4am the next day with her bra undone. Cosby is said to have given her a blueberry muffin as she walked out the door and told her: 'All right'. She is said to have become withdrawn and suffered

nightmares before confessing what happened to her mother and going to police, but no charges were brought.

In his police interview at the time Cosby admitted giving Miss Constand pills but claimed they were cold medicine Benadryl. He said it

'Unable to speak or move'

was a 'consensual sexual encounter' and she 'never told him to stop'. The complaint says that in a phone conversation with her mother, Cosby apologised and offered to pay for therapy and school tuition.

More than 50 women have accused

Cosby of being a predatory abuser who took advantage of young women from the 1960s onwards. Cosby has vehemently denied the allegations against him.

Prosecutors said yesterday that this case had been re-opened after evidence came to light in July.

Kevin Steele, first assistant district attorney for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, said: 'The evidence is strong and sufficient to proceed.' The new evidence is a deposition Cosby gave in 2005 during the original investigation, which was unsealed in July. In it Cosby admits drugging women using Quaaludes, a powerful sedative.

In the deposition Dolores Troiani, the lawyer who represents Miss

Constand, asked Cosby: 'When you got the Quaaludes, was it in your mind that you were going to use these Quaaludes for young women that you wanted to have sex with?' Cosby replied: 'Yes'.

In court yesterday Cosby seemed bewildered and frail. CNN reporter Jean Casarez said he smiled and thanked Judge Elizabeth McHugh at the end of the hearing. Cosby, who did not enter a plea, is accused of aggravated indecent assault in the first degree. The statute of limitations for the offence is 12 years, meaning charges were filed two days before the deadline. Spencer Kuvin, who represents model Chloe Goins, one of Cosby's accusers, told CNN she was 'happy and teary-eyed'.



Hearing: A frail Bill Cosby is supported by aides as he arrives in court in Philadelphia yesterday clutching a thin walking stick

Every London gun cop on duty for New Year

EVERY firearms officer in London will be on duty for the New Year celebrations tonight in an unprecedented security operation.

Scotland Yard has cancelled leave for more than 2,000 armed police – the first time it has taken such a step.

It comes amid intelligence warnings that Islamist fanatics may be planning a terror attack in a European city – although there is no specific information to suggest London is the target. One senior officer urged the

Daily Mail Reporter

public to be 'reassured' rather than alarmed by the extra police on duty.

Superintendent Jo Edwards added: 'People can expect to see more police and more firearms officers.'

'This is something that has been the case since the Paris attacks.'

British Transport Police confirmed there would be more armed police on duty at

train and Tube stations 'to provide further reassurance to everyone'.

Those heading out to celebrate tonight will need to wrap up – as temperatures are set to drop below freezing across much of the country. The South could see the mercury fall as low as -3C (27F), resulting in the first widespread frost in weeks after an unusually mild December.

News of the biggest ever armed police operation in London comes as New Year's

Eve fireworks in Brussels have been cancelled for security reasons.

The Belgian capital remains on high alert over a possible terror threat.

Meanwhile Austrian police have stepped up security in Vienna and other cities after receiving a warning of possible attacks.

And Moscow's Red Square, traditionally a place where Russians gather to ring in the New Year, will be closed to revellers amid mounting security concerns.