

Hameli sues state officials,

By JANE HARRIMAN
Staff reporter

WILMINGTON — Former chief medical examiner Dr. Ali Z. Hameli Tuesday sued the state officials who fired him April 6 for alleged verbal sexual harassment of a female employee.

Hameli charges he was denied the constitutional right to due process by Carmen R. Nazario, secretary of health and social services, and Thomas LoFaro, deputy director of labor relations for the state Personnel Office. Hameli says they ignored state procedure for handling sexual harassment complaints and fired him without cause, breaching his contract.

Hameli is seeking reinstatement, back

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pay, a fair hearing before an impartial tribunal, and unspecified damages for anguish and injury to his reputation.

The U.S. District Court suit says a woman who worked in the medical examiner's office for less than seven weeks, leaving in September 1993, filed a discrimination charge against him with the Department of Labor Nov. 1. Hameli denies harassing her and says that during her employment, she never "called into question" his conduct.

For five months, the suit says, Hameli had no details of allegations against him. But March 22, LoFaro told him "a second employee had made similar allegations," gave some details, and told him to resign or be fired.

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When Hameli denied harassing either employee and refused to quit, LoFaro allegedly told him if he did not cooperate, the state would "initiate a criminal investigation against him." (Two days after Hameli was fired, the attorney general's office confirmed it was conducting an investigation.)

On March 24 LoFaro told Hameli's lawyers, Sheldon N. Sandler and Bhavana Sontakay, that Hameli would get "pre-termination due process" and a post-termination hearing if he decided not to quit.

On March 29, his lawyers told the state Hameli "had not engaged in any act of sexual harassment and had always treated his employees and all others with courtesy and respect" and would fight termination.

Hameli was given until April 5 to re-

quest a hearing — not enough time to respond, the suit says.

On April 5, LoFaro called Hameli to a meeting with him and Nazario. They gave him a letter dismissing him immediately. "He was told that he could remove his personal belongings over the weekend and was asked to immediately return the keys to the state car he had been driving, which he did," the suit says.

The suit says that in 1991, Hameli, now 61, was dissuaded from early retirement by then-Gov. Castle, Nazario's predecessor, Thomas P. Eichler, and the chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

A spokeswoman for Nazario said Tuesday neither she nor LoFaro would comment.

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