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A brick sign reading “Gettysburg College” is in front of a brick building with many windows.

Shannon Keeler said she was a student at Gettysburg College in Adams County, Pa., when she was assaulted.

An American man who was arrested in France on accusations of sexually assaulting a Pennsylvania college student in 2013 has been extradited to the United States to face charges, the French authorities said.

The man, Ian Thomas Cleary of Saratoga, Calif., was put on a flight on Thursday morning from Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris, said Christophe Mira, senior prosecutor at the Metz Appeals Court in France.

Mr. Cleary, 31, was arrested last year in France after a three-year search that was prompted in part by Facebook messages he sent to the woman he is accused of assaulting years before, in 2013. The student, Shannon Keeler, reported to the authorities in Adams County, Pa., where she was attending Gettysburg College, that Mr. Cleary — also a student at the college — had attacked her on the night of Dec. 15.

But Mr. Cleary was not charged until 2021, after Ms. Keeler found a series of messages that he had sent her on Facebook in 2019, including one that read: “So I raped you.”

Calls and messages to Héloise Rouchel, a public defender for Mr. Cleary in Metz, were not immediately returned. It was unclear if anyone else was representing Mr. Cleary.

Ms. Keeler told the authorities that Mr. Cleary had followed her and a friend home after a party on campus, according to a probable cause affidavit. The friend told Mr. Cleary to “go away” after he offered $20 to be left alone with Ms. Keeler, the affidavit said.

But soon after she arrived home and the friend left, Ms. Keeler heard a knock and opened the door without looking through the peephole, the affidavit said. It was Mr. Cleary, and authorities said that he entered the apartment, kissed Ms. Keeler and had sex with her without her consent. He left after apologizing, Ms. Keeler told the authorities, and Ms. Keeler messaged a friend for help.

“It has bothered me over the years that I was never able to do anything,” Ms. Keeler said in an interview with The Associated Press in 2021. The authorities had told her that it was difficult to prosecute assault cases in which the victim had been drinking, she said. After the case was first closed, she discovered that a rape kit she submitted had been destroyed.

In a statement issued by her lawyer on Thursday, Ms. Keeler welcomed the news of the extradition.

“The arrest and extradition give me renewed faith that, after many years of waiting, the justice system can work when survivors persist with the help and support of family, friends, advocates, and attorneys,” she said.

Her lawyer, Andrea Levy, added, “It is a very meaningful day for Shannon in her long journey seeking justice and healing.”

Image

Shannon Keeler, wearing a black shirt and a necklace, poses for a portrait in front of a brick building.

Ms. Keeler in 2021. Credit...Chris Carlson/Associated Press

After eight years, Mr. Cleary was charged after the discovery of the Facebook messages. Ms. Keeler passed them on to authorities in Adams County, who issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Cleary in June 2021. The U.S. Marshals came to believe that Mr. Cleary was abroad, The A.P. reported, and he was the subject of an Interpol red notice seeking his arrest.

He was arrested last April in the French city of Metz in connection with a case involving the possession of stolen goods, the prosecutor's office at the Metz Appeals Court said. On Thursday, Mr. Mira, the senior prosecutor, said that he had not been prosecuted for the stolen goods. He added that Mr. Cleary had told the French authorities that he had arrived in France two or three years previously.

Brian Sinnett, the Adams County district attorney, did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment. The U.S. Department of Justice, which oversees the U.S. Marshals Service, also did not immediately respond to a request for comment

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