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## Bahamas orders man lashed with cat-o'-nine-tails

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By John Marquis

NASSAU, Bahamas, Oct 10 (Reuters Life!) - A man convicted of trying to rape an 83-year-old woman was sentenced to eight lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails, a punishment used by the British Navy in the 18th century and reinstated in the Bahamas 15 years ago.

Altulus Newbold, 34, was sentenced on Friday to 16 years in prison after being found guilty of burglary, attempted rape and causing harm. Justice Jon Isaacs ordered that he receive four lashes of the whip at the start of his sentence and four upon his release, but suspended the punishment for three weeks pending a possible appeal.

The cat, a whip made of knotted cords, leaves flesh wounds and is used on the offender's back by a prison guard. It was outlawed in the Bahamas many years ago, but reinstated in the former British colony in 1991 in the face of rising crime.

Attorney General Allyson Maynard-Gibson supported the use of the cat and said it was retained only for the most "egregious" cases.

"I think the public is pleased to see the determination of our courts to see punishment meted out swiftly," she said.

Newbold was accused of breaking into a woman's home on Cat Island in July 2004 and trying to have sexual intercourse with her. The woman told the court that she grabbed Newbold's genitals and "mashed" them. He bit her to make her let go and then fled the scene.

Newbold apologized after the verdicts were handed down.

A spokesman for the attorney general's office said the cat was last used in 2000 on a child rapist. That was the first time it had been used since 1994.

Former Assistant Police Commissioner Paul Thompson said the cat was always considered an effective form of punishment.

"A long-serving prison governor told me that prisoners who received the cat never returned to prison. He considered it the ultimate deterrent," Thompson said.

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