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Jailer accused of having sex with an inmate

Investigators allege sergeant slept with murder suspect

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Credit: Jennifer Frew | The News Herald



At center, Thomas Edward Pearson, a Sgt. with Burke-Catawba District Confinement Facility, was arrested on Friday and has been charged with sexual activity by a custodian.

By: [MATTHEW HENSLEY](#)

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MORGANTON -- A Burke County jailer is behind bars on allegations he slept with an accused killer in local lockup.

Sgt. Thomas Edward Pearson, 58, of 109 Red Bud Drive, Morganton was arrested Friday at his place of work — the Burke-Catawba District Confinement Facility — on one count of sexual activity by a custodian, according to a Burke County Sheriff's Office press release.

The 58-year-old supervisor resigned Friday.

Pearson is accused of sleeping with Alicia Camille Goode, 32, a BCDCF inmate awaiting trial for murder, according to Lt. Becky Weatherman, BCSO.

The investigator said that Pearson is believed to have had sex with Goode at least eight times from January 2010 through last month and could face up to seven additional counts.

Goode told investigators that Pearson gave her more freedoms than other inmates in exchange for sex, Weatherman said, after other inmates came forward with allegations about the relationship.

Interim Jail Administrator Steve Whisenant said Pearson worked at night, when the sergeant on shift runs the facility.

“There are opportunities for the sergeant at night to do some things that others would not have,” he said.

New measures will be put in place, including additional security cameras, to prevent future incidents.

The administrator added that Pearson was a holdover from the past administration, and that the 58-year-old was on leave when he started.

The two have only worked together for about three months, according to Whisenant.

Whisenant took over the facility on Aug. 2 when his predecessor, Mike Metcalf, was placed on administrative leave. Metcalf was later fired after concerns were raised about the conditions within the jail.

Whisenant says he has hired more than 40 percent of the detention officers at BCDCF since becoming top jailer, noting that the facility is still in transition.

“We’ve made quite a few changes,” he said. “We’re still in the process of making changes... The taxpayers of Burke and Catawba counties are entitled to a good detention facility.”

A top priority for the administrator is having a top-notch staff.

“One of the things I have emphasized to the staff is we must have a professional organization,” he said.

He added that most jailers adhere to the law.

“It shouldn’t be a reflection on the overall facility.”

Weatherman also was critical of the sergeant’s actions.

“He crossed the line, and he doesn’t belong in this profession,” Weatherman said.

Pearson is jailed in Caldwell County under a \$50,000 secured bond. His first appearance will be Monday.

Whisenant said the 58-year-old would not be housed in Burke County to prevent a conflict of interest.

Weatherman said Pearson, who is married, has a clean criminal record.


Goode is accused of killing 18-year-old Pedro Arno Ramirez in a botched home invasion on Aug. 24, 2007, along with three other defendants. She also is charged with two counts of assault with a deadly weapon with the intent to kill inflicting serious injury and one count each of first-degree burglary and attempted armed robbery.


Her next court date is May 2.

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