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Pasco sheriff's deputy accused of sexually battering a woman while on duty

By Claire McNeill, Times Staff Writer

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NEW PORT RICHEY — Pasco County Deputy Carlos Xavier Lopez knew the house.

He and another deputy had responded to a call about a possible domestic incident there a few days earlier. Halloween evening, he returned for a followup — alone.

When he arrived, the on-duty, uniformed patrol deputy forced himself on a 44-year-old woman, reaching inside her jeans to touch her sexually, boasting that he wouldn't be caught, according to a Sheriff's Office report.

Pasco deputies arrested Lopez, 41, on Wednesday on charges of sexual battery by a law enforcement officer, a felony that could result in prison time. He also was fired.

"This person absolutely committed a crime, and I don't care if he wears a uniform, it doesn't matter that he wore a star — he's a criminal," Sheriff Chris Nocco said in a news conference Thursday. "To ensure that we have the public's trust, we have to do the tough things. And sometimes the tough thing is to put handcuffs on somebody you used to work with."

Lopez has since posted bail, set at \$50,000, and was released from jail. Attempts to reach him were unsuccessful.

A report about the sexual battery contains lurid details about the four-year deputy's alleged misconduct.

Lopez asked the woman into her garage and became flirtatious, according to the report. He grabbed her wrist and pulled her toward him, her hand brushing his gun, the report says. The deputy then kissed her, pressing his tongue into her mouth, an advance that made her feel "uncomfortable" and "numb," she told detectives. When he began kissing her neck, she pushed him back and asked, "What are you doing?"

According to the report, he told her he "could last for hours" and that "I'm not going to get caught." Then, the report says, he forced his hand inside her underwear and touched her, so she attempted to pretend someone was coming into the garage so he would stop. She walked inside the house.



Carlos Xavier Lopez, 41, was arrested Wednesday, accused of felony sexual battery while on duty.

The deputy followed her and tried to guide her toward a bedroom, asking if she wanted to touch him, according to the report. When the victim said no and walked into the living room, Lopez eventually left.

On Monday, the woman reported the incident, telling investigators that she would have fought Lopez, but that his position of authority intimidated her.

In later recorded conversations with the woman, conducted as part of the investigation, Lopez allegedly said he would have had sex with her if members of her family hadn't been home at the time.

Investigators confronted Lopez, who confessed to kissing and touching the woman sexually, Nocco said.

"I don't know whether or not she was trying to get away," Lopez told investigators, according to the arrest report.

Nocco said that as far as he knows, there was no prior relationship between Lopez and the woman. He called Lopez a "sick individual" and the assault "absolutely disturbing." He urged other possible victims to step forward.

"He will be accountable for every action that he took, I promise you that," Nocco said.

When investigators confronted Lopez, the deputy began sobbing and banging on a table, the sheriff said.

"I think it was the realization that he knew we had him," Nocco said.

Times researcher Carolyn Edds contributed to this report. Contact Claire McNeill at cmcneill@tampabay.com or (813) 909-4613. Follow @clairemcneill.

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