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Sergeant Pleads No Contest to Fondling Teenage Girls

Courts: The 16-year LAPD veteran is put on probation and receives a 36-day jail term. He resigns from the department.

July 03, 1997 | ANDREW BLANKSTEIN | TIMES STAFF WRITER

A police sergeant who fondled teenage girls after stopping them for curfew violations resigned Thursday from the Los Angeles Police Department after pleading no contest to four counts of assault.

David Louis Navarro, 41, was placed on three years' probation by Los Angeles Municipal Judge Eva Soper for a series of illegal searches between July and November 1996 in Sylmar and Chatsworth.

"He clearly used his uniform and position to take advantage of these girls," said Deputy Dist. Atty. Richard Goul. "The most important thing we wanted to do was make sure he never wears a badge again."

Navarro had been on administrative leave from the Foothill Division since November. The 16-year police veteran was also ordered to perform 200 hours community service, pay restitution and undergo psychological counseling. Navarro also received 36 days in the Los Angeles County Jail but was credited with time already served. He could have been sentenced to a maximum of four years in state prison.

"I think he's an embarrassment to the LAPD and specifically the Foothill Division," said Capt. Ronald Bergman. "He's really tarnished our image."

Navarro worked the Foothill area between February and November 1996, mostly working patrols from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. During that time, Navarro showed no evidence of disciplinary or behavioral problems, Bergman said.

Prosecutors allege that Navarro used a Los Angeles ordinance that prohibits people under the age of 18 from loitering in a public place after 10 p.m. as a justification to stop the women. He would then search the women, all between the ages of 16 and 18, touching their breasts and groin, Goul said.

LAPD regulations explicitly prohibit male officers from frisking a female suspect unless there is an emergency or crucial evidence could be lost or destroyed.

It took five months for one 16-year-old victim, who was assaulted in Sylmar, to report the incident to police. When another young woman came forward a week after she was assaulted in November, the LAPD began an internal surveillance operation that resulted in Navarro's arrest.

He was charged with assault in three incidents, one of which allegedly involved two girls.

The victims "indicated afterward they felt scared and violated because he had a badge and a gun . . . they had no ability to resist," Goul said.