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Ex-FBI internal affairs chief pleads guilty

WASHINGTON (AP) — The former chief internal watchdog at the FBI has pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting a 6-year-old girl and has admitted he had a history of molesting other children before he joined the bureau for a two-decade career.

John H. Conditt Jr., 53, who retired in 2001, was sentenced last Friday to 12 years in prison in Tarrant County court in Fort Worth, after he admitted he molested the daughter of two FBI agents after he retired. He acknowledged molesting at least two other girls before his law enforcement career, his lawyer said.

Conditt sought treatment for sex offenders after his arrest last year, said his attorney, Toby Goldsmith.

"The problem these people have is they don't really feel like it is their fault," Goldsmith said. "The treatment doesn't work unless you admit you are the one who instigated it, and he did that."

Conditt headed the internal affairs unit that investigates agent wrongdoing for the Office of Professional Responsibility at FBI headquarters in Washington from 1999 until his retirement in June 2001, the FBI said. He wrote articles in law enforcement journals on how police agencies could effectively investigate their own conduct.

FBI officials said Tuesday they had no information to suggest that Conditt had any problems during his career and he was never the subject of an investigation.

Goldsmith said he was concerned about the safety of his client in prison given that he is a former FBI agent and an admitted child molester. "He's not going to be comfortable in the penitentiary," the lawyer said.

Goldsmith said his client had admitted that he had molested at least two other girls before he became an FBI agent more than 30 years ago, but that there was no evidence of any wrongdoing while he served in the bureau.

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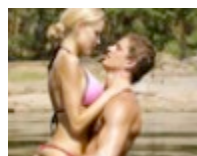
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"It seems that he never did because he had stricter control at that time," the lawyer said.

Conditt could have faced life in prison, and prosecutors requested he get 50 years. The judge sentenced him to 12 years in prison, in part citing Conditt's decision to spare the victim the trauma of a trial, Goldsmith said.

Conditt's conviction is the latest controversy to strike the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility.

Last year, FBI Director Robert Mueller transferred the head of the office to another supervisory assignment outside Washington, three months after rebuking him for his conduct toward a whistleblower.

That whistleblower, John Roberts, alleged the FBI disciplinary office had a double standard that let supervisors off easier than line agents.

Those allegations prompted investigations by Congress and the Justice Department inspector general. The latter concluded there was no systematic favoritism of senior managers over rank-and-file employees but there was a double standard in some cases involving crude sexual jokes and remarks.

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