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BOISE - A former Boise police officer has pleaded innocent to a charge of sexual battery of a minor.

Richard Beal, 28, was indicted last week, accused of having sexual contact with a 17-year-old girl who had accompanied him in his patrol car on several occasions as a "ride-along" passenger.

On June 30, the girl contacted police to allege that she had sexual contact with Beal at his home in May following a ride-along. Beal was on duty at the time, according to prosecutors.

During an arraignment Monday before 4th District Judge Deborah Bail, Beal entered a plea of not guilty, according to the Idaho Statesman newspaper's Web site. His trial is scheduled for Nov. 15.

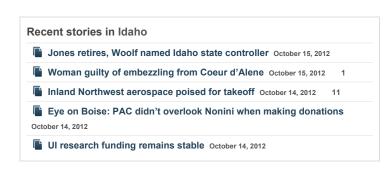
Police Chief Mike Masterson said Beal was removed from duty the day after the department received the girl's report. He resigned from the police force July 7 after 2 1/2 years with the department.

He was indicted by an Ada County grand jury on the sexual battery charge, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Beal turned himself in Saturday, posted the \$25,000 bond and was released.

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