

Sex claims against ex-Louisiana trooper aired in Alexandria courtroom

State and parish investigators said Thursday that Jay Sandifer lay in bed naked with a clothed 5-year-old girl who touched his private parts, just a slice of testimony in a federal court hearing in which prosecutors are trying to increase the prison sentence for the ex-Louisiana State Police trooper.

Sandifer pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Alexandria in October to one count of receiving Internet child pornography, which was found on his personal and work computers.

The hearing was a prelude to federal Judge Dee Drell meting out a sentence that maxes out at 20 years and a fine of up to \$250,000. But federal sentencing guidelines for the Internet crime would be far less than 20 years.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Campbell said the testimony, all from parish-level investigations in LaSalle and Concordia, was presented to "establish a pattern of exploitation" of young girls by Sandifer to increase the sentence.

stand today before Drell rules on how long he will be in prison.

Sandifer, 41, still faces state charges in LaSalle, Concordia and Franklin parishes. From 1998 until he was indicted in 2010, Sandifer is alleged to have had inappropriate contact with at least three girls ages 5 to 13 and had a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old female.

Besides being in bed with an unclothed Sandifer, the 5-year-old girl from LaSalle Parish told sheriff's Detective Connie Zeagler that Sandifer also took a bath with the girl, Zeagler said.

"She sat on his legs "»," Zeagler said. "She described that they were facing each other."

Medical examination of the girl showed there had been no intercourse, Zeagler said.

Zeagler said the girl told her that she and Sandifer had a name for his genitals -- "a

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goober."

Sandifer also had a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old girl who baby-sat for Sandifer, who told the teen that "he would be gentle" for her first sexual experience, Zeagler testified.

"She said they had sex three or four, four or five times," Zeagler said.

Sandifer still faces three state charges in LaSalle -- indecent behavior with a minor in the alleged contact with the 5-year-old, and one count of carnal knowledge of a juvenile in the case of the 16-year-old. Zeagler also said there is an "open investigation" dating to the late 1990s in which Sandifer allegedly had inappropriate contact with a girl when she was 11 to 13 years old.

George Higgins, who is Sandifer's attorney, noted that the girl told investigators that Sandifer was asleep when she touched him.

Zeagler also acknowledged that at one interview, the 5-year-old denied what she'd told investigators in earlier interviews.

State Police investigator Melissa Welch, who investigates sex crimes against children, said Sandifer displayed a pattern with young girls.

"One of the things that stood out was (Sandifer's) 'accidental showing' of his penis" to girls while he was alone with them, Welch said, and he often did

stretching exercises in loose-fitting shorts or boxer drawers when alone with one.

Other patterns: "The ages of the victims decreased in age" over the years, and Sandifer was friends with the girls' families, Welch said.

When the news of Sandifer's arrest and indictment was reported by newspapers and television stations, Welch said, for a while she received two to three calls a week from people who claimed to have information or claims of further crimes.

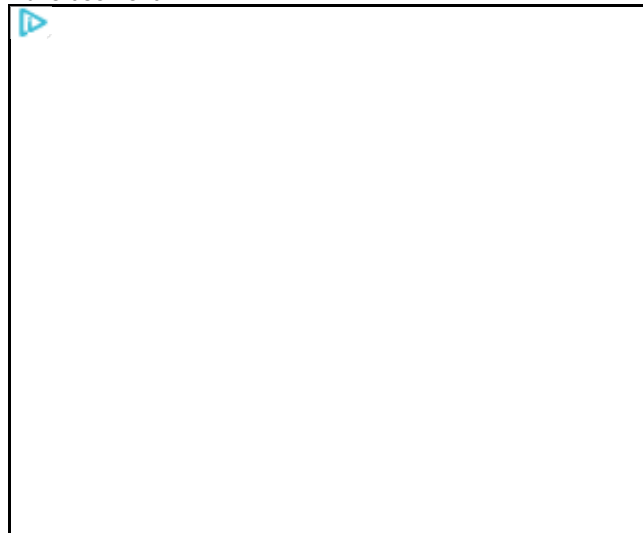
"It opened a can of worms," Welch said.

Higgins called eight witnesses in Sandifer's defense, including two sisters who had sexual relationships with Sandifer, who is married and has several ex-wives.

One witness, a 14-year-old girl, denied allegations that Sandifer exposed himself to her while on a boating trip with others.

"He didn't do nothing," she said.

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 Former Louisiana State Police trooper [Zoom](#)
Jay Sandifer is alleged to have had inappropriate contact with at least three girls ages 5 to 13 and had a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old female.

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