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Full report: Veteran Mobile police officer resigns amid allegations of sexual contact with teen

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By **Brendan Kirby, Press-Register**
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Mobile police officer Marshall Freeman speaks to Chastang Middle School students in this 2003 file photo. Freeman resigned this week amid allegations that he had sexual contact with a 16-year-old girl.

MOBILE, Ala. -- A 20-year veteran of the Mobile Police Department has stepped down amid allegations that he had sex with a 16-year-old girl, authorities said Friday.

Marshall Freeman, who joined the department in December 1989, resigned Thursday as officials were preparing to hold an administrative hearing. He could not be reached for comment Friday evening.

Police Chief Micheal T. Williams said his department would continue its investigation and refer the case to the Mobile County District Attorney's Office, which will decide whether to seek criminal charges.

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"The acts that have been committed are, obviously, immoral and appalling, and unethical. So it challenges all of our officers to go out and do the right thing," Williams said. "This, obviously, is a bad example. So we have to work harder to repair our reputation."

Williams said authorities received information March 3 that Freeman had had "inappropriate sexual contact" with the girl in July. Authorities would not say how Freeman, 50, knew the teenager or how many times they had sexual contact.

"We acted appropriately and swiftly and initiated an investigation," Williams said.

The chief said investigators questioned Freeman and that he admitted to the sexual contact.

District Attorney John Tyson Jr. said he has not yet been briefed on the matter. He said he has faith in the department to conduct its own criminal probe.

"Certainly, it is the business of the Police Department to find out what is going on in their own department," he said.

Tyson said prosecutors would not be able to use any statements that the officer made during the administrative investigation.

Freeman was assigned to the Community Services Division, which serves as a liaison between the department and the public, helping to organize neighborhood watches and disseminating information.

Prior to that, he worked as a patrolman, a traffic accident investigator and an officer in the narcotics and vice unit.

Freeman has a number of disciplinary actions on his record, though nothing related to a sexual matter, Williams said.

Freeman was suspended twice -- in 1991 after investigators determined he was at fault in a traffic accident involving his squad car, and again in 1996 for being absent from his post.

The chief said Freeman also had three minor infractions on his record, including a 2007 accident involving his squad car and failure to appear in court as a witness in a traffic case he handled in 2002. Freeman also was reprimanded in 2000 for neglect of duty, but Williams said he did not have details on that incident.

As a narcotics officer in 1992, Freeman was shot in his left leg, according to news accounts at the time. Police at the time said Freeman was shot as he was trying to arrest a drug suspect on Cherry Street in north Mobile.

That same year, Freeman was the target of a federal lawsuit by a Mobile man who claimed that the officer, who was working undercover as a street bum at a Mardi Gras parade, harassed him and his wife. The incident led to the man's arrest on a harassment charge, which later was dropped.

The suit also named two arresting officers and the city. A judge ruled in favor of the city; the officers settled the case out of court.

More recently, Freeman participated in the Kids and Cops program, which was designed to foster trust in police among children from public housing complexes.

"I hope I'm putting a positive example out there for the kids," Freeman said in a 2005 interview with the Press-Register. "I tell them they can come up to me anytime, and they learn that they can relate to me."

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