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Chief is depicted as controlling in sex trial

But defense says abuse claims came after suspect ended ties with kids' mom.

By Darcy Gray - The Hutchinson News - dgray@hutchnews.com

McPHERSON - A former Inman police chief charged with molesting four children was described Thursday as a controlling man who acted like a lovesick school boyfriend when a 14-year-old girl refused his advances.

In opening statements during the McPherson County trial of 39-year-old Mike Akins Jr., Assistant Attorney General Christine Ladner also said the girl was scared of what Akins might do if she disclosed the sexual abuse.

Akins is charged with 19 criminal counts alleging he molested, inappropriately touched or solicited three girls and one boy, all between the ages of 9 and 14, in 2009 while he was police chief of Inman, a town of about 1,200 southwest of McPherson.

Some of the inappropriate contact with the children is alleged to have occurred when Akins was in uniform. The 14-year-old girl told her mother about the behavior in December 2009 and then wrote about it in her diary, Ladner said.

Defense attorney David Harger, however, said the allegations against Akins came after he broke off a romantic relationship with the children's mother. Harger also indicated the 14-year-old was mad at Akins after she got into trouble for text-messaging her boyfriend and had to break up with the boy.

"She blamed Mike for that," Harger told jurors, adding that the tension between Akins and the children went into a "downward spiral."

The children's mother testified she met Akins in 2006 when she moved to Inman. She said Akins taught personal safety courses at the elementary school her children attended.

In 2009, Akins became more controlling, noticeably after her 14-year-old daughter had a boyfriend, the mother testified. Akins often text-messed the 14-year-old and her friends, and ate lunch with the girl at school - something her friend testified made her uncomfortable.

Under questioning from Harger, the mother acknowledged Akins also routinely ate lunch with other students.

When the girl spent the night at a friend's house on Halloween 2009, Akins text-messed the girl at 11 p.m. and had her meet him outside in his patrol car to leave, the friend testified. Akins also sent the girl flowers at school, apologizing after they'd gotten into a fight.

In December 2009, the mother and Akins split after fighting escalated, including Akins calling her daughter obscene names, the mother testified. The mother said she accepted an invitation to attend church with Akins

and his family, but Akins continued to call, threatened suicide and followed the children to Hutchinson when they were visiting their father.

The mother obtained a protection-from-stalking order in December 2009. A victims' advocate, upon hearing the description of Akins' behavior with the children, described the behavior as that of a "jealous boyfriend" and advised to ask the 14-year-old girl whether she'd been touched inappropriately, the mother testified.

After asking her daughter Dec. 30, the girl "immediately began crying and said, 'Yes, how did you know?,' " the mother testified. She asked her other children the following day and wrote notes about the abuse they disclosed.

"She said sometimes she would fight him - hit, kick, scream - and he would laugh about it," the mother said of her 14-year-old daughter trying to refuse Akins' advances.

Akins often carried a "loaded .45-caliber Glock" because he was police chief, and the girl said sometimes "she was too afraid to fight back," the mother said.

The mother denied "rehearsing" the kids or allowing them to read her notes. The mother also said she never told the girl what to write in her diary.

McPherson Sheriff's Detective Craig Hanson, the first witness called to testify in the trial, said he made the initial report in the case Dec. 31, 2009, before it was turned over to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

KBI Senior Special Agent David Klamm said Akins' home was searched, and his pistol, underwear, lotion, shaving gel and DVDs were seized. Klamm said no pornography was found.

Testimony in Akins' trial is expected to continue into next week.