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Ex-cop need not return to jail after sentencing

SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINOR: He spent 1,024 days in jail.

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Former Anchorage police officer Sammy Cohen will not serve any more jail time on his conviction for sexually abusing and exploiting his daughter.

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State Superior Court Judge Michael Wolverton on Thursday sentenced Cohen to 12 years in jail with eight suspended.

But Cohen will not return to jail because of the length of time he's already been incarcerated.

Cohen's sentencing came five years after his arrest by police detectives on charges of sexually abusing his daughter and possessing child pornography. He was not convicted of touching his daughter sexually but rather of taking nude photographs of her, including some in which he made her pose.

Last October, a jury found Cohen, 56, guilty of abusing and exploiting his daughter a decade ago. She was 14 years old at the time. The jury based its findings mainly on topless and nude photos Cohen took of the girl that were obtained by police officers. The police began investigating Cohen after a federal agency alerted them that he had purchased child porn on the Internet.

Cohen has maintained his innocence on all the charges. He plans to appeal, his attorney John Cashion said Thursday.

Several young women, including his now-adult daughter who lives out of state, testified against Cohen during last fall's three-week trial. The other women said Cohen bought them gifts, gave them back rubs and did huge favors for them when they were underage or close to it; Cohen was not charged with abusing or exploiting them.

The jury acquitted him of several sex abuse charges -- one involving touching and groping his daughter. A juror explained later that the jurors felt comfortable convicting him on the evidence they saw in photographs, but not on counts for which they had to rely solely on the daughter's word about what happened.

The daughter and other family members did not attend Wednesday's sentencing hearing and the daughter did not file a victim statement. The affected family members "want to put this behind them and want to have nothing to do with him anymore," said state prosecutor John Skidmore.

Two off-duty police officers testified in Cohen's support, praising his strong work ethic and loyalty as a family friend.

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Also in the courtroom were other former co-workers: police detectives who investigated Cohen.

"They became intimate with the details of the case and wanted to see a full measure of justice done," said police Lt. Dave Parker.

REDUCED SENTENCE

Skidmore argued in favor of a 20-year sentence with seven years suspended. He said the crime deserved a longer sentence than the norm given Cohen's role as a police officer.

Skidmore noted the high recidivism rate of sexual offenders who target children. Also, until Cohen admits his crime, his chances for rehabilitation are diminished, Skidmore said.

Cashion, Cohen's attorney, favored a sentence of two years in prison and three years of probation, saying that case law did not justify a longer sentence. He said that Cohen respects the judicial process and will follow his probation.

After a recess, Judge Wolverton imposed Cohen's 12-year sentence, with eight years suspended.

Wolverton told the courtroom that he specifically did not intend for Cohen to return to jail.

The judge said that while Cohen has a history of "concerning behavior," he believed that Cohen had "very good prospects" as a probationer.

1,024 DAYS

Cohen will not go to prison because he has already spent more than two-thirds of the four-year, unsuspended prison sentence in jail -- 1,024 days to be exact.

In Alaska, felons with good behavior do not need to serve the final third of their sentence, though they must return to jail to serve the remainder if they violate their probation.

Cohen spent a portion of that time in isolation due to his status as a former police officer and he was assaulted three times, once during transport, Cashion told the judge.

Cohen was an 11-year veteran of the Anchorage Police Department and was teaching at the police academy when he was arrested in 2005. He also served in the military for 23 years.

Cohen is now registered by the state as a sexual offender. Among the 18 conditions of his release, he must not contact the victim, he cannot have unsupervised contact with females under age 16 or have an e-mail account without his parole officer's permission, he cannot go to parks and playgrounds that minors use, and he and his property can be searched without a warrant for pornography, female minors or firearms.

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