

Glendale ex-officer accused of sexual abuse, suggestive texts

by **Lisa Halverstadt** - Aug. 17, 2011 07:09 PM
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A Glendale police officer who worked off-duty at Mountain Ridge High School resigned this spring after he was accused of sending sexually explicit text messages to teenage girls and sexually abusing one of them.

The Maricopa County Attorney's Office has yet to decide whether Christopher Balmaceda, 25, will face criminal charges. Glendale police have recommended the former patrol officer be charged with one count of sexual abuse and four counts of luring a minor for sexual exploitation.

For two years, Balmaceda worked two Wednesdays a month at Mountain Ridge. The married father was removed from the off-duty post and assigned to an administrative job in late January after a parent told police that his 16-year-old daughter's friends had received suggestive text messages from Balmaceda.

Glendale police immediately launched an internal probe.

Mountain Ridge students told investigators that Balmaceda had sent at least four female students, ages 15 to 17, text messages from his personal cellphone.

Cellphone records obtained by police showed Balmaceda sent about 3,600 text-messages to five female Mountain Ridge high school students from September 2010 through January 2011, according to an internal investigation.

In one case, he allegedly text-messaged a student after her underwear was exposed when she bent over.

"Oh, oh, oh, looked great bending over," he said, according to a student who talked to police.

In another, Balmaceda reportedly sent suggestive text messages to a student after he didn't write a ticket for a traffic accident she was involved in. The teen said she did not give him her cellphone number.


He was also accused of sending a photo of his chest to a 16-year-old student.

Detectives began a criminal investigation after a 17-year-old said Balmaceda had kissed and touched her one night in January after she met him at an abandoned Bashas store in north Glendale while he was on duty.

The 17-year-old said she threw up when she got home.

Glendale police soon confronted Balmaceda.

"Balmaceda admitted to me that from September 2010 through January 2011 he had sent numerous sexually explicit text messages to four female Mountain Ridge High School students for the purpose of gratifying a sexual desire," a Glendale sergeant wrote in an internal review.

According to the report, Balmaceda also admitted to the encounter with the 17-year-old girl. Balmaceda submitted a resignation letter two days after the interview. ed effective April 15.

Balmaceda did not speak to detectives investigating potential criminal violations, saying the police union had advised him against speaking without an attorney present.

Balmaceda told *The Arizona Republic* he would not comment on the allegations.

The Republic obtained his personnel records, which show Balmaceda was only disciplined once before in 3 ½ years as a Glendale officer. Last March, he received a written reprimand when he failed to arrive for an assignment at [Jobing.com](#) Arena after he was unable to secure child care,

according to police records.

At an October ceremony, Balmaceda received a "Lifesaving Award" for his efforts to revive a man who had collapsed at his home in March 2010.

On Wednesday, the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board voted to investigate whether Balmaceda should lose his right to serve as an officer in the state.

Sgt. Brent Coombs, a Glendale police spokesman, said the department has increased its oversight of off-duty jobs at schools since allegations emerged in January.

"In light of what's gone on, the coordinators for the security-related school jobs have much more constant communication with the staff at the schools as well as the officers working," Coombs said.

So far this year, no Glendale schools have full-time school resource officers as related grants have expired at three schools that previously had them, the sergeant said. That means officers are taking the side job helping with school security in their off-duty hours.

That's been the case for years at Mountain Ridge and Glendale officers continue to work there on an off-duty basis, said Sandi Hicks, a spokeswoman for the Deer Valley Unified School District.

The district has no plans to change its security plans, Hicks said.

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