

Former Staunton school cop arrested in online sex sting

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STAUNTON — A former Staunton cop and one-time school resource officer was nabbed Sunday night and charged with four felonies after he made plans to meet a fictitious 14-year-old girl he met on the Internet, according to a Staunton police report.

Police arrested John C. Nuckolls, 55, of Staunton, on two charges of attempted indecent liberties with a minor and two charges of use of electronic means to solicit sex from a minor.

Nuckolls was an officer with the Staunton Police Department from 1982 until his retirement in June 2008.

Police said Nuckolls was recently in an Internet chat room when he made contact with a male police officer posing as a 14-year-old girl.

The online conversations between Nuckolls and the undercover officer were sexual in nature, police said, and plans were made for Nuckolls to meet the fictitious teen at an undisclosed home on Staunton's south side.

Staunton police officers arrested Nuckolls on Sunday shortly after 9 p.m. following his arrival at the home.

Nuckolls retired as a school resource officer at Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton. When asked if Nuckolls retired under normal circumstances, Chief Jim Williams of the Staunton Police Department said he could not discuss personnel issues involving current or former employees. However, Williams did note that Staunton police officers are offered full retirement at the age of 50 if they've been on the force for 25 years.

The probe involving Nuckolls began May 14, according to his charges, which were read Monday in Staunton Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. Nuckolls, who is being held at Middle River Regional Jail, appeared via a closed-circuit monitor.

Asked by Judge Charles Ricketts III if he wanted to hire an attorney or have one appointed, Nuckolls said, "I'd like to hire my own if I can get out of here to do it."

Anne Reed, an assistant Commonwealth's attorney for Staunton, asked that Nuckolls be held without bond.

Ricketts denied bond and set a status hearing for June 3. The judge also noted that Nuckolls' bond could be reviewed before the next scheduled court date if the defendant hires an attorney before then.

Nuckolls remains behind bars.