



Former police chief found dead days before his child sex assault trial

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WEST COLUMBIA, Texas -

A former West Columbia police chief who was scheduled to go on trial for aggravated sex assault of a child on Monday was found dead in his backyard Thursday.

West Columbia police said Michael Palmer's cause of death has not been released.

Palmer faced multiple charges, including aggravated sexual assault of a child, and eight counts of tampering with evidence.

The former chief went on the run when investigators turned up evidence that he'd bound, gagged and sexually assaulted a young boy, repeatedly, beginning in 1998. They even say they found bondage gear in Palmer's office at the police department.

Police and EquuSearch volunteers spent days trying to find him. He finally turned up Monday, near the town of Brazoria, where investigators with the county district attorney's arrested him.

Palmer lost his job in February 2013 before the child sex charges were filed when fellow officers complained he was stealing pain killers taken as evidence in police investigations.



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