

Ex-police officer accused of assaulting 8 boys

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HUDSON, Wis. (AP) — A former police officer turned businessman accused of sexually assaulting a boy is facing additional assault charges involving seven more children in northwestern Wisconsin.

New charges filed in St. Croix County this week against Daniel Albert Barber, 46, allege that the former Somerset police officer sexually assaulted seven boys, including two toddlers and five others under age 9 dating back to 2004.

The charges are in addition to those filed in February involving a 6-year-old boy at Barber's home. Investigators said they also found child pornography on Barber's computer.

Barber has pleaded not guilty to those charges, including first-degree child sexual assault.

Barber's attorney, Mark Gherty, declined to comment on the additional charges Friday. Barber remained free on \$75,000 bond pending a court appearance, prosecutors said.

Many of the children came into contact with Barber after he offered to baby-sit for their families and sometimes used Craigslist and Facebook to connect with parents, according to St. Croix County Sheriff John Shilts.

"There seems to be a common thread that it was a family in need of baby-sitting or taking care of a child," Shilts said.

Barber appeared "to be a knight in shining armor, when in fact that was not the case," the sheriff told the St. Paul Pioneer Press (<http://bit.ly/1naFQOR>).

"It's very well thought out," Shilts said of Barber's behavior. "It's predatory in nature."

Shilts said Barber is well known in the North Hudson area. He owns St. Croix Storage & Transfer and worked part time as a police officer in Somerset from 1995 to 2003.

The latest criminal complaint alleges the assaults mainly happened at Barber's home, but also took place at Willow River State Park where Barber camped. The complaint states the incidents happened between August 2004 and February 2014.