

Allegations mount against ex-Miami cop accused of child molestation

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A retired Miami cop — accused of downloading child pornography and of video-recording himself molesting a young girl — boasted a long career replete with commendation after commendation.

But newly released internal affairs files for Juan Roman also contain two disturbing, previously undisclosed complaints lodged by citizens.

In one case, Roman was accused of repeatedly masturbating inside his car near an Overtown apartment building, so aggravating one resident that he beat up the officer. In another, an Allapattah man accused Roman of harassing him, then peeping into his window on his half-naked wife.

Roman ultimately escaped serious punishment on those allegations — but federal authorities are now using those reports, along with additional evidence, to help convince a judge to keep him behind bars before trial.

In newly filed court documents, prosecutors in state and federal court detail the growing case against Roman, who is now suspected of misconduct involving at least four other girls and secretly video recording several women. Agents are still reviewing over 500 videos found on his laptop and an external hard drive.

“He had the most child pornography downloads in Florida when they did the search warrant,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Kobrinski told a federal judge this month, according to a transcript filed in court.

Roman’s defense attorney, George Cholakis, said he is still evaluating the evidence.

“Recognizing the seriousness and emotions attached to the allegations, I think it’s really important to point out that these allegations occurred over a relatively short time in his life compared to Juan’s over 40 years of community service,” Cholakis said.

Roman’s increasing legal woes are a stunning twist for a longtime officer who, at least until recently, had many friends within the Miami police department.

He is a former U.S. Army reservist who was commended for his role as a military policeman in helping to secure Miami during the 1980s race riots.

Roman, 57, spent the majority of his career on patrol, with the last three as a spotter in Miami’s police helicopter. In that role, he received numerous commendations — including spotting a burglar, nabbing a man on a stolen motorcycle and doing a fly-over for the funeral of a Broward deputy killed in the line of duty.

“Over 70 commendations, and glowing ones,” Cholakakis said.

His internal affairs file contains complaints, most that went nowhere, that are not atypical for a longtime police officer: discourtesy, improper use of force, improper procedures. He was also reprimanded for a fender bender and parking in a tow-away zone.

But in 1993, a man named Silvio Guerra told investigators that he saw Roman masturbating inside an unmarked car in the 100 block of Northwest 14th Street while looking at a woman, the third time he’d been spotted doing so. Guerra confronted him and — in a struggle to keep him from fleeing — Guerra punched him over 20 times, leaving Roman bloodied and dazed.

To internal affairs detectives, Roman insisted that he had merely parked there in an attempt to change his shirt and tuck it in.

The investigation, however, fizzled after Guerra was shot and killed in an unrelated shooting. For admitting to taking off his pants to change his shirt in public, Roman received a reprimand.

In 2006, another man named Jose Rondon complained that Roman was harassing him in Wynwood, peeping in on his wife, then illegally having his car towed. But Rondon and his wife repeatedly blew off formal interview attempts by detectives, ending the probe.

Roman retired in January 2010. Since then, Roman had been taking care of his elderly parents at his Biscayne Park home.

But in July, federal cyber-crimes investigators identified Roman’s computer as having been used to share illegal sexual images of underage girls and boys, according to court documents.

Agents in August raided Roman’s home.

Roman, who was known for his love of the comic-book character Batman, told agents he never saw child pornography, but only used the file-sharing software to download music, court documents said.

Photos on his laptop and external hard drive — labeled “Batman G” — showed him wearing a cape, a mask and Batman underwear in various posed shots, according to court documents. He also sports a Batman tattoo on his arm.

Agents with Homeland Security Investigations found over 500 files “suggestive of child pornography” on Roman’s electronics. After Roman’s August arrest on federal child pornography charges, a federal magistrate released him on house arrest.

But investigators soon found more disturbing video clips, including hidden videos taken in a bathroom and a kitchen of Roman molesting what appears to be a 7-year-old girl in 2012, prosecutors say.

Last month, Miami-Dade police arrested Roman on state charges of lewd and lascivious battery on a child.

Since then, agents have found another series of videos, also covertly shot, of two other young girls, in the nude. A third file shows Roman recording what appears to be him engaged in lewd conduct with two underage girls via a video chat program similar to Skype, according to the government.

The videos “depict him being a hands-on offender,” federal prosecutor Kobrinski said during the court hearing.

Last week, state prosecutors also charged him with five counts of video voyeurism for allegedly filming, in secret, females of various ages using his bathroom.

So far, Roman is being held without bail on the state charges in a Miami-Dade jail. But federal counterparts, worried about him being released from state custody, are asking U.S. Judge Lawrence King to revoke his bond. He has yet to issue a ruling.

Wrote the prosecutor: “This defendant is both a risk of flight and a danger to the community.”