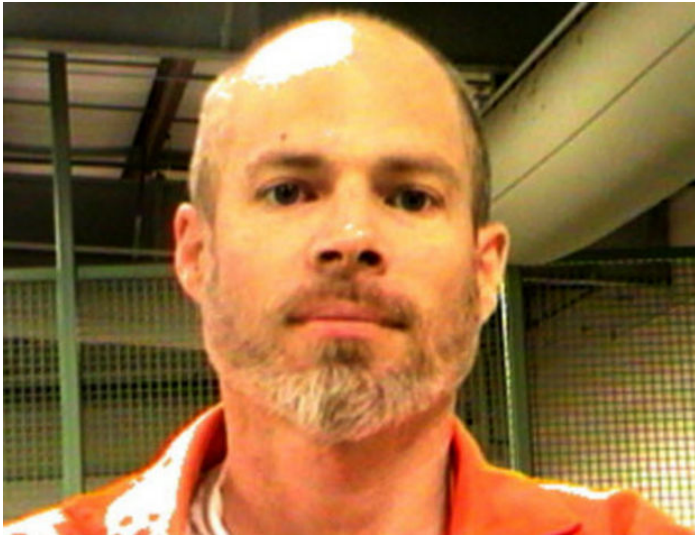


## NOPD officer accused of raping child sends racy text messages during jury selection

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Thomassie.michael.cop.jpg

NOPD officer Michael Thomassie, 41, faces a potential life sentence as he began trial Tuesday (Aug. 18, 2015) in Orleans Parish Criminal District Court on a charge of aggravated rape. Thomassie is accused of sexually assaulting a young girl several years ago when she was between the ages of 7 and 9, according to court documents. *(Courtesy of Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office)*

A New Orleans police officer charged with raping a girlfriend's young daughter more than 10 years ago expressed hope to others that his 19-year-old accuser would not appear in court to testify and exchanged racy text messages with a new

girlfriend during jury selection, prosecutors said Wednesday (Aug. 19).

Michael Thomassie, 41, faces a potential life sentence if found guilty as charged of aggravated rape. The 13-year NOPD veteran is accused of raping the girl in two rooms of an Algiers home on one day between Oct. 1, 2003, and Dec. 31, 2005, when the girl was between 7 and 9 years old.

The alleged attack was not reported to New Orleans police until 2013, and Thomassie pleaded not guilty in March 2014.

His trial got off to rocky start Wednesday when it was revealed that prosecutors hurriedly obtained a search warrant and confiscated Thomassie's phone late Tuesday afternoon while a jury was being selected. Prosecutors said family members involved in the case alerted them that Thomassie was potentially tampering with witnesses or attempting to obstruct the case with text messages he was sending from the courtroom.

Defense attorney Patrick Fanning sparred for more than an hour with prosecutors Laura Rodrigue and Tiffany Tucker over the text messages' content and intent, before Orleans Parish Criminal District Court Judge Tracey Flemings-Davillier ruled the exchanges recovered from Thomassie's phone from the past 24 hours were relevant and admissible. Rodrigue told jurors about several of the messages during her opening statement.

"We learned from a family member that he text messaged, 'It's not too late for (the accuser) not to show up,' that the state will have to drop the charges," Rodrigue told the jury. "He tells another

witness the 'key points' she should testify to. This is a rare instance where we are extremely disappointed with someone who has the privilege to be a New Orleans police officer. But our disappointment was doubled yesterday when we see text messages from a fellow NOPD officer saying 'the best-case scenario is for (the girl) not to come forward and the state would have to drop the case.'

"That's not going to happen."

The latter exchange was found on Thomassie's phone from Monday night, as Thomassie discussed his case with NOPD colleague Sgt. Bruce Glaudi, a 30-year veteran of the force who investigates 3rd District property crimes in Lakewood and Gentilly. Glaudi was summoned to court after Rodrigue read the following exchange he had with the defendant:

**Thomassie:** "The DA has added a psychologist as an expert witness."

**Glaudi:** "If (the girl) wants to drop the charges or not testify, how can the DA charge her with perjury? She's not saying she lied. She's just saying she wants to drop the case and not testify anymore."

**Thomassie:** "The DA has them scared. They're dirty. That's what they do."

**Glaudi:** "Pat is sharp, and is dealing with two dumb females. So you should be OK."

It was unclear from the exchange whether Glaudi was referring to the girl and her mother as potential witnesses, or to the female assistant district attorneys handling Thomassie's prosecution. Glaudi was seen attempting to explain himself to the prosecutors in a courthouse hallway during the trial's break for lunch.

Rodrigue also said Thomassie had taken "selfies" in the courtroom, photos he sent to a girlfriend in Florida during Tuesday's jury selection, showing off his smooth face after shaving off a goatee before trial. The two exchanged flirty texts about whether Thomassie also preferred women to be clean-shaven.

"He responds, 'No hair is best,'" Rodrigue said. "Hours before sitting in court for trial for the aggravated rape of a 7- or 8-year-old girl."

Thomassie was arrested and placed on unpaid emergency suspension after he was indicted by an Orleans Parish grand jury Feb. 13, 2014. He pleaded not guilty in March 2014 and has been free on a \$150,000 bond since last December, according to court records.

The girl who accuses Thomassie of the sexual abuse, now 19, was expected to testify Wednesday afternoon.