

LOCAL NEWS

HIGHLAND: Ex-deputy sentenced to 13 years for sex with teen





Former San Bernardino County sheriff's Deputy Nathan Gastineau was in court Friday, March 21, for sentencing. He received the maximum sentence: 13 years and eight months.

By **JOHN ASBURY** | San Bernardino Sun
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A San Bernardino judge called an ex-sheriff's deputy "cowardly" and sentenced him to more than 13 years in prison for having a sexual relationship with a 15-year-old girl.

Nathan Gastineau, 30, appeared in court Friday morning wearing a green jail uniform and shackles as he was sentenced for having the 2011 relationship with an Explorer student. The victim sat quietly in the courtroom, but did not speak.

The girl and her parents were not identified in court, in order to protect her identity.

Though Gastineau's attorney, Andrew Haynal, argued he should be released on probation for his service with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, as well as awards and character references, Judge William Jefferson Powell IV handed down the maximum sentence of 13 years and eight months in prison.

Gastineau is required to register as a sex offender for life.

The judge accused him of minimizing his actions and creating a web of lies that denied his role in the abuse.

"Clearly he was in charge. He was in control of this young person," Powell said. "His attempts to make himself a victim are revolting and cowardly."

Gastineau was convicted in January of 17 charges, including lewd acts with a child, unlawful sex with a minor and possession of child pornography.

Prosecutors said Gastineau met the girl through the San Bernardino County sheriff's Explorer program in Highland, which introduces teens to law enforcement. Gastineau led a team called The Ghostbusters, named after a team of sheriff's deputies and the movie.

Though Gastineau initially denied the relationship, he later said they only had sex one time.

But the girl said the relationship lasted for about six months. Prosecutors found a video of Gastineau recording their sexual encounter in the bedroom of his Redlands apartment. He also took photos of the girl and used his department-issued handcuffs during their encounters.

The girl's parents said in court Friday that Gastineau showed no remorse, and instead put the blame on the girl. Her father said the family moved out of their home because he knew where they lived and he couldn't sleep without a gun in his lap.

"He's the most evil bastard to ever wear a badge," her father said. "Nathan Gastineau, you are a predator with a badge. ... Was it worth it, Nathan? You told me my daughter was like a little sister and you would protect her. But you were the bad guy she needed protection from."

Haynal argued that Gastineau should be given a suspended sentence, meaning he would be free and that any infraction would result in a full prison term. Haynal said Gastineau should be given a lighter sentence comparable to Redlands teacher Laura Whitehurst, who was charged with 41 counts and served four months in jail for having a child with a student.

Gastineau made a brief statement before he was sentenced, calling the affair a "monumental mistake and a huge lapse in judgment."

"I let down my community, the Sheriff's Department, Jane Doe and her family, and myself. I hope my future conduct can demonstrate how truly sorry I am for any harm I may have caused," Gastineau said. "I hope my future actions can speak louder than words."

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