



BANDERA COUNTY COURIER

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2014-05-29

Former local peace officer accused of sexual assault

By Judith Pannebaker BCC Editor

A former local law enforcement officer has been arrested and indicted for felony continuous sexual abuse of a child and indecency with a child. Ruben Niño, 36, was arrested on Friday, May 16, and released the next day on \$70,000 bond. He had served as a deputy marshal for the City of Bandera, as well as a jailer and reserve deputy at the Bandera County Sheriff's Office.



On March 23, a BCSO deputy responded to a disturbance at Niño's home in the Wharton's Dock area. Niño's 15-year-old stepson had accused him of "punching him in the face," according to law enforcement reports. Shortly after that incident, a female acquaintance contacted the sheriff's office to report that Niño had allegedly been having sexual relations with her "since she was 12 or 13," the report continued.

Criminal investigators with the sheriff's office opened an investigation into the allegations and presented their findings to the Bandera County Grand Jury on Tuesday, April 8. The grand jury true billed Niño on both felony charges.

Niño's troubles began earlier when he resigned from his position as deputy marshal in May 30, 2013, due to allegations of inappropriate behavior with a teenage girl.

The incident allegedly occurred in Bandera City Park on May 29, 2013. City Marshal James "Charlie" Hicks and then-City Administrator Mike Cardenas interviewed the female teenagers who were involved. During that investigation, other allegations - also overtly sexual in nature - came to light.

Although Niño denied the allegations, he had failed to delete three circumstantial photos on his department cell phone prior to turning in his law enforcement equipment. "He got rid of the cell phone history, but didn't delete the photographs," Hicks said.

"I told him I had lost confidence in him as a peace officer and gave him a chance to resign," Hicks continued. "If he hadn't resigned, I would have begun steps to terminate his employment." Niño resigned just one day after Hicks confronted him about his alleged unprofessional behavior.

At that point, Hicks began an internal investigation into the incident and requested assistance from the Texas Rangers. The Rangers approved Hicks' handling of the situation, but ultimately could not uncover sufficient evidence to charge Niño with the crime of "official oppression" at that time.

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