

Former Marin cop in child porn case pleads guilty to stalking charge

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2016 Cop Pedophile Michael Manuel Ramirez

A former Novato police officer accused of exchanging lewd images with an 8-year-old Texas girl pleaded guilty to attempted stalking, a felony.

Michael Manuel Ramirez, 35, also admitted to a misdemeanor charge of sending lewd images to a minor for purposes of sexual gratification, according to the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office.

Under the plea deal, the prosecution dismissed two felony counts, possessing child porn and coaxing or coercing a minor to produce lewd images, and a misdemeanor count of child harassment.

Ramirez, a Rohnert Park resident, faces three months in jail when he is sentenced Oct. 17, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Brian Staebell. Ramirez could have faced up to 18 months for the attempted stalking conviction.

Ramirez will not have to register as a sex offender, but he will be required to participate in the Safer Program, a Sonoma County rehabilitation program. Safer stands for Sex Offenders and Families in Effective Recovery.

The prosecution did not allege that Ramirez knew the girl was 8 years old.

Ramirez accepted the plea on Tuesday, three days before his scheduled preliminary hearing. Staebell said the prosecution was partially hampered because the girl and her mother fell out of contact with authorities.

Ramirez's lawyer, Jane Gaskell, did not return calls seeking comment Thursday.

The investigation began last year in Texas, where the parent of a girl discovered she was sending and receiving lewd images with a man online, police said. The parent called police, and the case was referred to a computer crimes task force.

Investigators then took over the girl's account and posed as her to continue the conversations with the man. Detectives eventually traced the man's internet account to the Rohnert Park residence of Ramirez and his wife.

Rohnert Park police obtained a search warrant for the home and the computer equipment in the residence. Ramirez was not arrested while police and prosecutors conducted further investigation over several months.

Ramirez was arraigned in January and pleaded not guilty, but resigned from the Novato Police Department. His lawyer said Ramirez did not want “the seriousness of these allegations to affect the public’s opinion of the Novato Police Department as a whole.”

Ramirez worked for the department for about six years.

Ramirez was the second member of the Novato Police Department to quit the force this year amid criminal charges. On Jan. 20, Dan Jenner resigned his job as a sergeant after pleading guilty to embezzling more than \$1,500 from the police union. — (c)2016 The Marin Independent Journal (Novato, Calif.) Visit The Marin Independent Journal (Novato, Calif.) at www.marinij.com Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC. AMX-2016-08-26T00:01:00-04:00