

Monmouth SWAT leader arrested, charged with luring child

[Dan Alexander](#) September 7, 2018



TOMS RIVER — Howell police Sgt. Richard Conte, the head of Monmouth County's emergency response team, was charged with attempting to lure or entice a minor into a motor vehicle.

Conte, 47, was arrested after being accused of making arrangements to meet a teenage girl in what turned out to be a sting operation in Toms River, according to a source familiar with the case but not authorized to speak about it.

Jail records show he was locked up on Friday.

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Conte's first appearance in court in Ocean County is scheduled for Wednesday. The state Attorney General's Office intends to ask a judge to keep Conte locked up pending trial.

Sgt. Christian Antunez, spokesman for Howell police, said Conte has been suspended without pay from his \$140,000 job.

After New Jersey 101.5 reported on the arrest, Howell Police Chief Andrew J. Kudrick Jr. released further details, saying that Conte believed he had been speaking to girl he believed to be 15 years old.

"Prior to the arrest, I was made aware of the situation," Kudrick said in a statement Friday. "It sickened me to learn one of my officers, a highly competent supervisor none the less and one that I have worked alongside with for many years on the SWAT team, not only defied my trust, but fellow officers as well. But most importantly, defied the public's trust and expectations of a police officer. As such, I fully supported the investigation

and provided input to ensure his apprehension."

Kudrick also criticized New Jersey 101.5 for reporting on the story, saying the news organization did so "without first consulting with me or others directly connected to the investigation." In fact, New Jersey 101.5 sought comment from his department before publication and also sought confirmation about the case from the Attorney General's Office and the Superior Court in Toms River.

In New Jersey, arrests are public record. The charges against Conte as well as his arrest booking photo were publicly available on the Ocean County Jail website before New Jersey 101.5 published its story.

[NJ.com](#), citing an unnamed source, said Conte's arrest was part of a larger sting that was targeting other people for doing the same thing.

Conte was promoted to sergeant in 2017 after joining the force in 1997, [according to the Howell Patch](#), and has been commander of MOCERT since 2009.

The Attorney General's Office and Toms River police did not immediately return requests for further information.

New Jersey 101.5 did not know Friday whether Conte has an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article has been updated.

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