

## Berthoud Officer Jeremy Yachik admits physically abusing 15-year-old girl for years

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LOVELAND, Colo. - A Berthoud police officer was captured on a video punching, kicking and choking a screaming 15-year-old girl to punish her for eating carrots out of a refrigerator, according to court records.

The girl told Loveland police investigators that Berthoud Officer Jeremy Yachik abused her almost daily for years. The abuse allegedly included restraining her hands with handcuffs or plastic zip ties and then slamming her head into a wall hard enough to leave a hole and choking her until she blacked out, according to a Loveland Police Department arrest affidavit. He also beat her with ropes, restricted her food, shackled her in a darkened room for hours and force-fed her "ghost pepper sauce" that's roughly 10 times hotter than habanero peppers.

During a voluntary Sept. 27 interview with Loveland investigators, Yachik, who is 5-feet-11-inches tall and weighs 270 pounds, admitted doing many of these things to the girl, the affidavit said. The officer also confirmed he was the man shown in the video abusing the teen in July 2012.

Asked why he did these things, Yachik told investigators the teen "won't communicate" with him, the affidavit said. He didn't cite anything the girl had done to warrant these punishments, police wrote.

Yachik was arrested Wednesday on a warrant charging him with four counts of child abuse resulting in injury and one count of false imprisonment, all misdemeanor charges, according to police records.

The criminal investigation led Berthoud town officials to suspend Yachik and Berthoud Police Chief Glenn Johnson earlier this month. Town officials also arranged to have Larimer County sheriff's Sgt. John Feyen serve as interim police chief until the criminal investigation is completed. The Sheriff's Office is also conducting an internal affairs investigation into how the Berthoud Police Department handled the accusations of police misconduct.

The child abuse video came to the attention of Loveland police on Sept. 25 after Ashley Saint-Roberts, Yachik's former fiancée, sent it to several news organizations and police agencies, the affidavit indicates. Saint-Roberts said Yachik had abused her and the teen girl for years.

Saint-Roberts said she began going public with the video after she sent it to Yachik's boss, Chief Johnson, and he did not respond to her. However, Saint-Roberts said Yachik did call her and said, "Nice try...trying to get me fired...it's not going to work," according to the affidavit.

After the ex-fiancée sent the abuse video to news organizations and police agencies, she said Yachik deleted the video from her cellphone. Saint-Roberts said Yachik told her he was mad that she recorded the video, warning that "he could lose his job as a Police Officer for something like

that," the affidavit stated.

During a search of Yachik's Loveland home, investigators say they found evidence of child abuse, including repaired drywall damage near a fireplace where the 15-year-old victim said Yachik slammed her head.

During a search of the Berthoud police chief's office, Loveland police said, "evidence was collected that corroborated Ashley's account of attempting to report this incident to Chief Johnson," the affidavit stated.

The teen victim told investigators that Yachik routinely physically forced her to eat ghost pepper sauce when he accused her of lying. The girl said at times her mouth and stomach burned from the indigestion the hot sauce caused, "even causing her to vomit on one occasion," the affidavit said.

Between July 1, 2012 and Oct. 2, 2012, the girl described being choked around the neck repeatedly by Yachik. She described at least one choking incident when she felt dizzy, suffered blurred vision and eventually blacked out, the affidavit said. She recalled waking up on the floor, feeling dizzy and confused.

After investigating the allegations, Loveland police obtained an arrest warrant for Yachik on Tuesday.

The officer was arrested at his Loveland home without incident on Wednesday morning, police said. After being taken to the Loveland Police Department to be processed for arrest, he posted a \$1,500 bond and was released.

Yachik and Saint-Roberts, who lived together for years until she left him this summer, are embroiled in other legal battles.

In March 2013, Saint-Roberts was arrested in Loveland on a domestic violence incident and charged with misdemeanor assault and obstructing phone service, court records state. She pleaded not guilty and is scheduled for a jury trial on Dec. 16. She's free on \$5,000 bond.

After Saint-Roberts' domestic violence arrest, Yachik obtained a protection order, barring his fiancée from contacting him and a 6-year-old boy with his last name, court records state.

In June, Saint-Roberts was charged with violating the protection order, court records state. Larimer County prosecutors dismissed the woman's protection order violation case on Oct. 1 -- as Loveland police and prosecutors burrowed into the abuse investigation against Yachik.