

## Former New Port Richey police officer sentenced to jail time in Hernando

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John Michael Nohejl was fired by the New Port Richey police.

BROOKSVILLE — A former New Port Richey police officer convicted this week of possession of hydrocodone, fleeing law enforcement and evidence tampering will spend the next 2 1/2 years in jail.

Hernando Circuit Judge Anthony Tatti on Thursday sentenced John Michael Nohejl to three consecutive terms of 11 months and 29 days in the Hernando County Detention Center. Nohejl, 35, has already served 133 days since his arrest.

After a day and a half of testimony, a six-member jury decided Wednesday that Nohejl fled from a traffic stop in Spring Hill while in possession of hydrocodone. But the jury cleared him of the more serious charge of trafficking in the drug.

A Hernando vice detective stopped Nohejl for speeding on Deltona Boulevard in Spring Hill, but Nohejl refused to provide identification and sped away, according to testimony. The detective and a Hernando patrol deputy in a marked cruiser caught up to him a block away.

Investigators found one hydrocodone pill on the driver's-side floorboard. In a front yard about 100 feet behind the Kia, a deputy found a cellophane wrapper holding 27 pills that matched the one on the floorboard.

Friends and family on Thursday told Tatti that Nohejl is kind, generous and a good father to his young daughter. Then Nohejl spoke.

"My life's been destroyed, and I'm in the process of rebuilding right now because I'm on the road to recovery," he said.

Tatti told Nohejl his crimes warranted time in a state prison, but the law doesn't permit that because he does not have a prior criminal record. Nohejl's actions, Tatti said, went beyond mistakes fueled by a drug problem

"And in your position, you were in a particular place to understand the significance of what you did," Tatti said.

Tatti also ordered Nohejl to serve 12 years of drug offender probation and serve 100 community service hours.

At the time of his arrest, Nohejl was on suspension from the New Port Richey Police Department, where he had a lengthy disciplinary record, but Tatti granted a defense motion to keep his

profession from the jury.

Nohejl ultimately was fired from the department in February for failing to report the arrest to his supervisors and for refusing to cooperate during an internal affairs investigation.

While out on bail, Nohejl was arrested in April in Hernando County and charged with driving under the influence and possession of marijuana. That case has yet to be resolved.

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