

Former MARTA cop charged in child sex case

Allegedly had 5-year 'relationship' with minor girl

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Willie Clarence Lee Jr.

JONESBORO — An Ellenwood man who worked 12 years as a MARTA police officer has been charged with having a long-term physical relationship with a child that included sex at his home more than 50 times, said authorities.

Willie Clarence Lee Jr., 46, was arrested Tuesday morning at his Ellenwood home by the Clayton County Sheriff's Fugitive Unit. He is being held without bond on one count of aggravated child molestation and is expected to make his first appearance Wednesday in Clayton Magistrate Court.

Lee is no longer employed with MARTA, said sheriff's Capt. Brian Crisp.

In a warrant issued to Clayton police Detective Joann Southerland, Lee is accused of having a physical relationship with a young relative of a female acquaintance. The alleged victim is now 15 and police said the relationship started when she was 9.

Southerland said in her affidavit that Lee continued to communicate with the girl over an extended period of time. When the child got into trouble on New Year's Eve, her cell phone was taken away by her guardian and examined, said Southerland. On the phone were explicit text messages and at least one photo of Lee's genitals he sent to the girl, she said.

Lee was arrested in January by DeKalb County police and was released on \$10,000 bond. Crisp said a subsequent investigation into some 450 pages of text and photo messages led to the Clayton charges.

Southerland said Lee told police he thought he was texting an adult relative of the girl.

"It is clear he knew the phone belonged to the child," said Southerland in her affidavit.

During her interview with police, the girl reportedly said she had sexual relations with Lee more than 50 times at the Ellenwood home he shared with his wife. The girl also allegedly said Lee gave her money.

Because of Lee's former occupation in law enforcement, Crisp said he is being segregated from the general jail population for his own safety.