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## December 2013

A police officer in the Northwest Alaska village of Kobuk is charged with soliciting a 12-year-old girl for sex.

The officer, Leon Outwater, was arrested Thursday, according to Alaska State Troopers. Court records said Outwater is 22 years old.

Outwater sent at least 20 text messages to the girl in a 24-hour period asking her for sex, troopers said Friday. He allegedly sent the text messages from a village-owned cellphone while he was drunk on duty.

Outwater faces three felony counts: two charges of soliciting first- and second-degree child sexual abuse as an authority figure and one charge of evidence tampering.

It happened between Nov. 16 and 17, according to the charges, which were filed in court Friday. The girl's mother became concerned about her daughter's safety after seeing the texts on a phone she had given the girl, and she called troopers in Kotzebue the morning of Nov. 20, the charges say.

"When relieved of his duties, Outwater tampered with evidence when he deleted the text messages from the phone," troopers said in a statement posted online.

The charges say another village police officer took over for Outwater after his shift ended, and the phone did not have the messages on it at that time.

A trooper investigating the mother's allegations learned that village records confirmed Outwater was on duty when he sent the text messages, something Outwater admitted, according to the charges.

"I was drunk," he said, as quoted in the charging document.

Troopers flew from Kotzebue to Kobuk, about 155 miles, and arrested Outwater at about 10:30 a.m. Friday, the trooper statement said.

It is unclear if Outwater was fired or suspended.

The Kobuk administrator who said she supervised Outwater declined to comment Friday and did not give her full name. She refused to say anything about Outwater's employment, including whether he had been terminated or put on leave, and would not say how long Outwater had worked for the village.

Outwater wrote in a post on his Facebook page that he had started the job Oct. 19.

"Cant wait to see my first check!" he wrote the next day.

According to court records, Outwater was set to make an initial appearance in Kotzebue court Friday afternoon.

Troopers spokeswoman Beth Ipsen said the investigation continues as troopers look for more leads or other possible victims. As of Friday, Ipsen said, there was no evidence Outwater had sexual contact with the girl or any other minor.

Ipsen said Outwater was not arrested until about a month after the initial complaint because that was how long it took to investigate, including whether Outwater was on duty when he sent the text messages. Troopers did not think the girl would be harmed in the meantime, Ipsen said.

In general, village police officers are employed by individual villages. They are different from officers in the Village Public Safety Officer Program, who are trained and overseen by the Alaska Department of Public Safety and employed by regional corporations or, in the case of the Northwest Arctic Borough, by the borough.

Village police officers are allowed to carry firearms if their employer allows it. Village public safety officers are not. Ipsen said Kobuk village police officers do not carry guns.

About 140 people live in Kobuk, which sits next to the Kobuk River north of the Arctic Circle.

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