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Former Silverton cop pleads guilty to sex abuse

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SALEM, Ore. (AP) - The police officer involved in the fatal shooting of an Irish national last summer pleaded guilty to sexually abusing a girl.

Tony Gonzalez, who resigned from the Silverton Police Department on Aug. 1, was sentenced Monday to six years and three months in prison.

Police in Keizer, 15 miles west of Silverton, started the investigation July 13, about two weeks after Gonzalez shot 20-year-old Andrew Hanlon while

responding to a burglary call.

The death sparked a protest in Silverton and attracted a flurry of attention in Ireland. But a grand jury determined the shooting was justified because the officer thought Hanlon was armed.

The sex allegations emerged when a woman and her daughter contacted authorities. They said Gonzalez began abusing the girl four or five years ago, stopped for awhile and then resumed shortly after the shooting.

Gonzalez, 35, reportedly told police he had tickled and sexually touched the girl. Despite the apparent confession, the case was set to go to trial this week until Gonzalez changed his plea to guilty.

In court Monday, Gonzalez, his voice breaking with emotion at times, said he loved his family and hoped they could go on and find happiness, the Statesman Journal newspaper reported.

"One thing I regret is the fact that I placed my family second to my own needs," Gonzalez said. "I should have been more of a husband and a father, that's something I can never get back."

The victim and her mother declined to make statements.

Marion County Judge Joseph Guimond handed down the sentence and wished the victim luck. "If you need some counseling, by all means, take it," Guimond told her. "Don't let this ruin your life, ma'am."