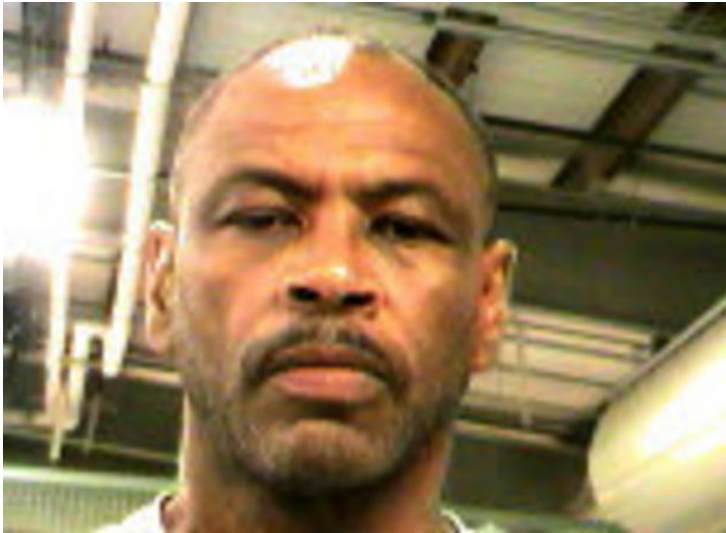


## Arrested NOPD officer accused of twice molesting relative visiting his home

By Ken Daley, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune | Follow on Twitter on July 30, 2014 at 9:30 AM, updated July 30, 2014 at 11:22 AM

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Willie Gant.jpg

Willie A. Gant, 57, a 26-year veteran of the NOPD, was booked early Wednesday (July 30) with two counts of sexual battery on a juvenile and two counts of indecent behavior with a juvenile after a preteen female relative told investigators she was molested on two separate occasions at Gant's home. *(Photo courtesy of Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office)*

A veteran New Orleans police officer stands accused of molesting a preteen relative on two separate occasions this month as she visited his St. Claude-area home.

Willie A. Gant, 57, was placed on emergency suspension without pay and arrested Tuesday (July 29) night following an investigation by the NOPD's child abuse unit and the department's Public Integrity Bureau. Court records show Gant was booked early Wednesday morning with two counts each of sexual battery on a juvenile and indecent behavior with a juvenile.

Bond was set at \$50,000.

A 12-year-old girl told investigators this week she had been sexually assaulted twice by Gant at his home, an arrest warrant obtained by Detective Sgt. Lawrence Jones says. She told detectives the first incident occurred during the first week of July, and the most recent happened last Saturday at approximately 5 a.m.

The girl told police that she was sleeping on an air mattress during the July 26 visit to Gant's home, when she was awakened by her relative touching her below the waist underneath her clothing. The warrant said she told police that other children also were visiting with Gant, and that she had "urged the children not to leave her alone in an effort to prevent further abuse from Gant."

The girl told police that, approximately three weeks earlier, Gant had sexually assaulted her during a separate visit to his home, touching and fondling her breast, genitals and buttocks under her clothes.

Gant's attorney, Patrick Giraud, said investigators had executed a search warrant Tuesday at the home Gant shares with his wife and four young children. Giraud did not say what police were

looking for, but said his client "vehemently" denied the allegations.

"He is absolutely denying everything," Giraud told NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune on Tuesday following Gant's arrest.

Gant has been with NOPD for 26 years and most recently was assigned to the high-profile mounted unit that patrols Bourbon Street and the French Quarter on horseback.

Gant was arrested and temporarily suspended from duty in 2009 in connection with a lawsuit seeking to collect unpaid child support. He also was investigated by the PIB in 2008 after a complaint that he punched a French Quarter tour guide during a traffic dispute on Dauphine Street.

Gant is the fourth NOPD officer to be suspended in the face of criminal allegations in the past 19 days.

Tactical Officer Stephanie Caldwell was suspended without pay and booked with two felony charges of domestic violence after being accused of trying to run down a man with her car before crashing into a utility pole last Sunday at 3:30 a.m. at the corner of Rousselin Drive and Lapeyrouse Street in the 7th Ward.

On July 14, fellow SWAT Officer Christopher Carter was suspended and booked with domestic abuse battery and domestic abuse battery involving strangulation, authorities said.

Three days earlier, Detective Robert Hurst was booked with simple battery and attempted murder following an argument with his former girlfriend. Prosecutors later dropped the attempted murder charge.

Carter and Hurst have pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

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*Staff reporter Jonathan Bullington contributed to this report.*