

## Huntington Beach fires policeman accused of rapes

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — The Huntington Beach Police Department has fired a police officer who is accused of rape, forcible sodomy and 17 other charges of physical abuse, officials said.

James Roberts III was fired April 15 after an internal investigation about the charges, police spokesman Lt. Russell Reinhart said.

Roberts' attorney John Barnett declined to comment on his client's termination.

Reinhart said the department is investigating other police employees in relation to Roberts' conduct, but he could not elaborate.

"The purpose is to maintain the public's trust and to have a thorough and complete investigation," he said in an e-mail to the Register. "If any misconduct is sustained, appropriate discipline, up to and including termination, will be the result."

Seventeen charges were filed in September against Roberts, included false imprisonment, threats, domestic battery, aggravated assault, dissuading a witness by force or threat, and vandalism. Three new accusations filed in March — spousal rape by force, sodomy by force and forcible rape — involve the same two victims as the earlier charges.

Roberts pleaded not guilty to all charges and a preliminary hearing is set for April 28.

On March 10, a woman claiming to be Roberts' ex-girlfriend filed a claim against the city of Huntington Beach alleging that the city, chief of police and several officers conspired to cover up the alleged abuse.

It's the second such claim filed against the city based on Roberts' alleged conduct. Roberts' ex-wife filed a claim Sept. 24 and a lawsuit against the city on Nov. 24 with similar allegations.

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