



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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District Attorney Mike Ramsey and Sheriff Jerry W. Smith announced today the arrest of Earl Klapperich, 27, for allegedly agreeing to meet with a minor for the purposes of engaging in a lewd act. Klapperich, a deputy for the Sheriff's Office, was arrested on Friday evening, May 11, 2012, by investigators from the Butte County District Attorney's Office. The arrest was the culmination of an investigation which began when the Sheriff's Office received a complaint on April 14, 2012 concerning the manner in which Klapperich handled a call involving two underage girls who had been reported as runaways. The complaint alleged inappropriate conduct on the part of Klapperich towards the girls, one 16 years of age and the other 14 years of age.

When concerns arose that the allegations involved criminal activity, the Sheriff's Office brought the District Attorney's Office into the investigation and an undercover operation was commenced. During that operation investigators posing as the 14-year-old girl initiated contact with Klapperich via text messaging. A number of text messages were exchanged between Klapperich and the investigators. The text conversation turned sexual in nature and Klapperich asked the "girl" to send a nude picture to him. Eventually a meeting was proposed and Klapperich agreed to meet the "girl." Klapperich went to the location in Chico where he believed the 14-year-old girl was waiting. When he arrived, Klapperich was taken into custody by investigators from the District Attorney's Office.

Ramsey said Klapperich told investigators his intent in meeting with the girl in Chico was not to have sex with her, but to counsel her. After his arrest, Klapperich was booked into the Glenn County Jail in lieu of the Butte County Jail for security reasons. Klapperich later on Saturday morning posted bail and was released. He is due to appear in Butte County Superior Court on June 1, 2012, to face potential charges of Arranging a Meeting with a Minor for the Purpose of Engaging in Lewd or Lascivious Behavior.

Sheriff Smith said, "I am disheartened by this arrest, but the Sheriff's Office takes allegations of misconduct on the part of employees very seriously. Complaints are thoroughly investigated and if wrongdoing is discovered, appropriate action will be taken regardless of whom is involved."

Klapperich has been removed from duty and his peace officer powers have been suspended pending the completion of an internal affairs investigation. Because this involves a personnel matter, the Sheriff's Office is not in a position to provide any further details. All inquiries pertaining to the criminal investigation and prosecution should be directed to the District Attorney's Office.