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## City police officer charged with aiding prostitutes

### 16-year veteran also charged with drug crimes, obstruction of justice

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By Sadie Gurman, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A longtime Pittsburgh police officer ran a prostitution service, helped the women obtain drugs and provided them transportation for their work, Allegheny County police said Monday.

Detectives charged Officer Michael Johns, 43, a 16-year veteran of the police bureau, with crimes including promoting prostitution, drug possession and delivery, conspiracy, obstruction of justice, insurance fraud and filing false reports to law enforcement. Police linked online ads for prostitution to Officer Johns, who would provide the women with cell phones and rental cars "to travel and do shows and deals," according to a criminal complaint.

Formerly an officer in the city's Hill District station, Officer Johns was transferred into the warrant office soon after the county's investigation began. His status with the police bureau was unclear Monday night, when he was arraigned and released on his own recognizance.

The investigation spawned from an April traffic stop involving a car that was rented by Officer Johns. Police said the driver of the Cadillac, William Oravetz, was found to be carrying a key ring with a small piece of paper on it bearing the name of Alivia Kail, a 19-year-old Mount Washington woman who has been missing since March.

"We don't have anything to connect [Officer Johns] to Kail," said county police Superintendent Charles Moffatt, whose detectives are investigating Ms. Kail's disappearance. Police aren't sure how the item ended up in the rental car, the superintendent said, adding that the prostitution investigation "has not furthered" the investigation into Ms. Kail's whereabouts.

Mr. Oravetz, who also faces prostitution charges, had been driving a woman to a man's house for a "sexual performance," the complaint says. He told police the car had been rented by the woman's "boyfriend," Officer Johns; police found Officer Johns' police identification card in the woman's purse. The woman, identified in an online sex ad as "Gabby," told police that she is an exotic dancer and performer who met Officer Johns three years ago while he was working an off-duty detail in uniform at a South Side nightclub. She said she supports herself through erotic performances, in which clients arrange for her to "perform" at their houses or elsewhere for money, the complaint says.

She spent time at Officer Johns' Brookline apartment, and for the past year he "knowingly rented vehicles and furnished them to her to travel and do 'shows and deals,'" according to the complaint. He also gave her cell phones to promote her services and let her use a computer in his home to post online ads to adult websites, the complaint says. Police said Officer Johns spent thousands of dollars to post the sex ads.

The woman told police after the April traffic stop that Officer Johns had given her the rented Cadillac nearly a month earlier along with his identification card, which she had kept in the center console for weeks.

When officers questioned Officer Johns after the stop, he told them he had an ongoing sexual relationship with the woman and that he "likes strippers and whores," according to the complaint.

He said he was unaware the woman had a drug habit. However, after city police this month arrested her and another woman on prostitution and drug charges, they both told police that Officer Johns gave them money to buy heroin "on numerous

occasions," the complaint says. The women said the officer "allows them to shoot/use the heroin at his apartment, and he likes to watch them get high. ... He even keeps needles at his apartment for them to consume the narcotics," the complaint says.

Detectives on Saturday set up a sting in which they said they watched Officer Johns drive two police informants in a taxi cab to purchase heroin in Marshall-Shadeland. The informants summoned Officer Johns to drive them there because he had done so before, the complaint says. Police said they recovered 19 stamp bags after the trip.

Officer Johns' attorney, Phillip DiLucente, said his client acknowledges a relationship with the woman but denies helping anyone purchase drugs. He said the woman "manufactured evidence," perhaps to avoid her own legal trouble.

"He's worked his whole career to fight against that," Mr. DiLucente said. "He's certainly not going to facilitate it."

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