

Santa Clara cop arrested, charged with supplying confidential info to Hells Angel

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A Santa Clara police officer, who previously served on the San Jose police force, was arrested Thursday on a \$250,000 warrant charging him with felony conspiracy after authorities say he gave confidential information to a member of the Hells Angels.

Clay H. Rojas, 36, a five-year veteran of the Santa Clara Police Department, was booked into Santa Clara County Jail, along with William Bettencourt, 38, a suspected member of the Hells Angels Santa Cruz chapter, and Vivian V. Rodriguez, 31, of San Jose. Bettencourt is being held without bail. All are being charged with conspiracy to commit a crime.

Santa Clara police released limited information about the case, saying only a criminal investigation revealed that Bettencourt had confidential Department of Motor Vehicles information about "private parties," and that it was Rojas who apparently provided it to him.

Bettencourt, in turn, gave the information to Rodriguez, whose relationship to Bettencourt and Rojas remained unclear.

Santa Clara police and the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office immediately launched an in-depth investigation, auditing the department's computer systems, which they say confirmed that Rojas had obtained the information.

Authorities did not disclose the type of information, but a spokeswoman for the DA's office said that Rojas supplied it to Bettencourt between Aug. 19 and Sept. 3.

No other police officers are believed to be involved.

"This

incident tarnishes the good name of our department and our profession, but at the end of the day, I believe this is an isolated incident limited to one employee," Santa Clara Police Chief Steve Lodge said in a statement.

"He made some incredibly bad decisions that amount to criminal conduct," Lodge said. "The remaining members of my department are hard-working, ethical professionals who are just as appalled as I am at this breach of the public's trust."

Rojas was hired by the San Jose Police Department in October 1998, sources said. He was one of several officers involved in a 2000 use-of-force case that ended with the death of Shaheed Jamal Daniels. After officers responded to a domestic quarrel incident, Daniels died while officers tried to subdue him.

Rojas is expected to be arraigned on Monday.

If convicted, Rojas and Rodriguez face a maximum of three years in prison. Bettencourt, who has previous felony convictions for assault with a deadly weapon and a criminal threat, faces 25 years to life under the Three Strikes law.



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