

# Officer charged with rape suspended twice before: [ZONE FINAL Edition]

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## Officer charged with rape suspended twice before

By Kris Antonelli

Staff writer

A county police officer awaiting trial on rape charges has been suspended from duty twice in the last 11 years in connection with other, unrelated cases, one of which involved an allegation of rape.

Michael Dennis Ziegler, 39, received a 30-day suspension in 1979 after another woman claimed he raped her in her home as her daughter and another girl slept in the next room.

He also received a three-day suspension in 1984 when he failed to write a rape report taken from a Laurel woman.

Ziegler was indicted by a county grand jury on a second-degree rape charge after a Crofton woman said he raped her in his patrol car last Nov. 15. His trial date has not been set.

Although the 18-year veteran was disciplined for the two earlier incidents, he was never charged criminally and neither incident was brought to a grand jury. Since November, Ziegler has been free on personal recognizance and is suspended without pay.

"They promised me in writing he would never work on the street again," said the woman who charged Ziegler raped her in

1979. "I went through hell for years after that. I will never trust a police officer again."

Acting Police Chief Robert Russell confirmed that in the 1979 incident, Ziegler waived his right to an administrative hearing and then-Chief Maxwell Frye suspended him without pay for 30 days, the maximum permitted under department regulations. He was assigned to communications for about eight months before returning to patrol duties.

In a letter to Frye, Warren B. Duckett, state's attorney at the time, said there was not enough evidence to present the case to

a grand jury or criminally charge him.

"Had Chief Frye thought that he raped her, he would not be here," Russell said yesterday.

Russell said he will wait for the outcome of Ziegler's trial on the November charge before moving on an internal investigation. "I can't sit here and say we are going to fire him or not."

Ziegler could face an administrative trial board of three officers, one of equal rank to Ziegler.

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# Officer charged with rape was suspended in '79, '84

## ZIEGLER

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That board would recommend action to Russell, who would have the final decision. Ziegler could waive the trial board and just accept the chief's decision, as he did in the 1979 incident.

Ziegler's attorney, Richard May, would not comment on the incidents. Attempts to reach Ziegler were unsuccessful.

Police records show on Aug. 27, 1979, Ziegler was answering a call about a domestic fight on Allard Court in Glen Burnie when he was approached by a woman, who has asked that her name not be used.

The woman, 37, in an interview last week, gave the following account, which nearly matches the 1979 county police report of the incident:

She dropped her boyfriend off at work and returned home to find a stranger standing in the hallway of her apartment building. She walked outside to tell Ziegler, who had just broken up a bloody fight.

Ziegler grabbed her hand, she

said, "as if to comfort me," and she jerked it away and returned to her apartment.

About five minutes later, she answered a knock on the door and Ziegler asked to use her phone. She showed him into the kitchen and went back out into the living room, she said.

As he walked out of the kitchen, he began unbuttoning his shirt, she said, and asked if she could get some blood off his shirt. She agreed and took the shirt into the kitchen, leaving him in the living room.

"When I walked back into the living room, he had his clothes off," she said. "I was too stunned to scream."

She said she had two sleeping children, ages 2 and 14, in the apartment. "He told me that I had to do what he said or he would bust me for prostitution and possibly hurt my kids."

Ziegler also found a piece of marijuana paraphernalia in her living room and threatened to charge her.

"All I could think of was who



MICHAEL DENNIS ZIEGLER  
Suspended in 1979 and 1984

was going to take care of my kids if I went to jail."

She said he ordered her into the bedroom.

"The whole time he kept his gun close to him and that's what made it so scary," she said. "I cried the whole time. He didn't have any sympathy. He said as he was leaving: 'If you need me again, my name is Mike.'"

The woman reported the incident nine hours later.

She picked Ziegler's photo out of a stack of 15 given to her by detectives.

The police report says she told officers Ziegler bit her breasts during the attack. An examination confirmed small bruises, but the

doctor was unable to confirm they were caused by teeth.

The report also says a state police sergeant conducted a polygraph test and concluded she was telling the truth.

Police sources close to the 1984 investigation give this account of the events leading up to his three-day suspension:

Ziegler failed to file a report from a woman who said she had been raped. He talked the woman out of reporting it, and a few days later returned to warn her not to tell any other officers that she had been raped — she should tell them only that her assailant had made sexual advances toward her.

He kept in contact with the woman, and at one point tried to arrange a date. He told her to call him at the station and say she was "Mrs. Brown" if other department members tried to question her about the incident.

The sources also said Ziegler sat on the couch and tried to pull her close to him and asked her if she had ever been in trouble before.

After an internal investigation, Ziegler was suspended for three days for failing to write a report.

Like the 1979 woman who was caught with marijuana paraphernalia and the 1984 woman who said she had just been raped, the Crofton woman was in a vulnerable position on the night of Nov. 15.

Court records show that at

about 1:30 a.m., Ziegler was patrolling on Mountain Road in Pasadena when he pulled over the woman in a Toyota truck on suspicion of drunken driving.

He ordered her into his cruiser, took her license and began to drive her home. He passed her neighborhood and continued to drive along Route 424 until he reached the parking lot of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church.

He parked behind the building, got out of the car and took off his coat, shirt, gun and pants. He laid his gun on the back seat, got back into the car and took off the woman's underwear, the indictment said.

He told the woman she would not be charged with drunken driving if she cooperated, the indictment said, then raped her.

The woman was not charged with DWI.

The woman called police after he took her home. The documents said the only words the dispatcher could understand was "I want, I need," and then the call was disconnected.

Police traced the call and sent officers to her home.

The court records said Ziegler's radio was identified through the radio-dispatch system as the one used to call in the traffic stop to dispatchers. Investigators also found a fingerprint left by the woman on the passenger side door. She offered a physical description that matched Ziegler's.