

NEWS

Arrested Taytay priest a gun owner –police

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Msgr. Arnel F. Lagarejos, the priest who was arrested last Friday for allegedly "booking" a 13-year-old girl, had once pulled a gun on his victim, police said Monday, citing the girl's testimony.

In an interview on Radio DZBB, Marikina Police chief Senior Superintendent Roger Quesada said the girl told the police that Lagarejos pointed a gun at her in their previous meeting in June and told her not to accept bookings from other men.

"Masasampahan po natin siya ng, kung wala pong papel 'yung baril, ay illegal possession [of firearms]," Quesada said.

"Dahil po sa salaysay ng bata, may nakita siyang baril noon nung una. Kaya po naghalungkat ang ating mga operatiba at nakunan nga ng baril pero hindi naman po ginamit ngayon sa

pagte-threaten sa bata."

Quesada said Lagarejos, 55, a parish priest in Taytay, Rizal, did not have a gun when he was arrested contrary to earlier reports.

The gun, which investigators found later on, will be brought to Marikina Police for custody. Initial reports state that Lagarejos legally owns the gun.

Meanwhile, it will be up to the prosecutor if additional charges will be slapped on the priest regarding his past meetings with the girl.

"Depende na po sa posisyon ng korte o yung piskalya kung ano po yung desisyon nila po dun kasi na-inquest yung kaso at bahala na po yung piskalya po dun," Quesada said.

Lagarejos was arrested in an operation that was set up after the girl's mother informed the Women and Children's Protection Desk (WCPD) of the Marikina Police about the priest's alleged illegal activities.

Quesada clarified that it was not an entrapment operation as the girl had no prior knowledge of the operation.

Also arrested was the girl's 16-year-old pimp, who allegedly arranged the meeting between the girl and Lagarejos through text and supposedly received P500 from the priest for the child's services.

While Lagarejos remains in police custody, the girl and the her alleged pimp are in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. —**Rie Takumi/KBK/KVD, GMA News**