

Bail set at \$100,000 for suspect in child-sex case

By Pat Doyle; Staff Writer

A judge set bail at \$100,000 Thursday for a man charged with sexually molesting boys in central Minnesota. The man also is under investigation for possible links to the abduction of Jacob Wetterling. **Duane Allen Hart**, 42, pleaded not guilty to charges of sexually assaulting two boys in 1987 and 1989 in northeastern Kandiyohi County. One allegedly was assaulted when he was 11 and again when he was 13. The other boy was 15 years old.

Kandiyohi County Attorney Michael Lynch said he will charge Hart within several days with molesting two other boys.

A public defender was appointed to represent Hart, a high school dropout who has lived in a fishhouse and more recently rented a room on a farm near Belgrade, Minn.

Kandiyohi County District Judge Arthur J. Boylan granted the defense request to prohibit investigators from questioning Hart without first contacting his attorney. Boylan also forbade TV and still photographers from taking pictures on the floor of the courthouse, where yesterday's arraignment took place.

The task force investigating the abduction of 11-year-old Jacob was trying to determine whether Hart is linked to that case or the sexual assault on a 12-year-old boy in Cold Spring, Minn. Wetterling was kidnapped in St. Joseph in October and the Cold Spring boy was assaulted last January about 10 miles away. Hart lived about 30 to 40 miles from where those crimes were committed.

The Wetterling task force indicated that it plans to put Hart in lineups to help determine if there is a link to the Cold Spring or Wetterling cases, Lynch said. He said authorities fear that publication or broadcast of Hart's photo would jeopardize a lineup.

The charges against Hart contain allegations that are dissimilar to many of the facts in the Wetterling abduction and the the Cold Spring assault.

The charges accuse Hart of fondling the two boys and on one occasion offering a boy \$5, apparently for sex. Authorities said allegations against him accuse him in some instances of enticing the boys to engage in sexual contact.

In both the Wetterling and Cold Spring cases, there was a strong show of force and the threat of a weapon. A masked man confronted Jacob Wetterling; his brother, Trevor, 10, and friend Aaron Larson, 11, on a road near the Wetterling home on Oct. 22 where the boys were riding bicycles. He pointed a gun at them and ordered Aaron and Trevor to run while pulling Jacob away.

In the Cold Spring case, the boy reported he was walking home last January when a man forced him into his car, drove him 5 miles to a secluded area and assaulted him. The abductor later dumped the boy off and told him to run or he'd shoot him. The boy never saw a gun.

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