Beat: News

Former Philadelphia Police Officer Pleads Guilty to Child Pornography Offenses

William Watts, Sr., 56, of Philadelphia

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USPA NEWS - United States Attorney Jacqueline C. Romero announced that William Watts, Sr., 56, of Philadelphia, PA, pleaded guilty before United States District Court Judge Joel H. Slomsky to the charges of receiving and possessing child pornography.

In June 2022, the defendant was charged by Information with child exploitation offenses. The FBI arrested the defendant in October 2021 after investigating a CyberTip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. At the time of his arrest, the defendant was a police officer in Philadelphia's First Police District and had amassed a collection of hundreds of images of child pornography between his online accounts and electronic devices. Watts has since resigned his position with the Department, and as a result of his conviction, he faces a sentence of up to forty years in prison, lifetime supervised release, and mandatory restitution of at least $3,000 per child victim, and other fines and penalties. Watts remains incarcerated at the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia pending sentencing.

"Watts has admitted to seeking out videos of children being abused for his own gratification – thus adding to the demand for these types of images to be produced and more children to be victimized," said U.S. Attorney Romero. "Our Office and our law enforcement partners are committed to doing the difficult work of investigating and prosecuting these heinous crimes in order to hold people like this defendant accountable, no matter their position in the community or occupation."

"That William Watts repeatedly broke the law while sworn to uphold it is disappointing," said Jacqueline Maguire, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Philadelphia Division. "That he was collecting images of children being sexually abused is disturbing. All those who seek out this despicable material are perpetuating the victimization of innocent children. That's why the FBI so doggedly pursues these cases. Protecting kids from this physical and emotional trauma is our priority."

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The case was investigated by the FBI and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kelly Harrell.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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