

Ex-cop gets 30 years for massive child porn stash

By Guillermo Contreras

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A former police officer who served 12 years for molesting a child was sentenced Thursday to another 30 years in federal prison for a child-pornography stash so large that agents had to stop counting the images.

Charles Leroy Earl, 65, was a police officer in Reno, Nev., for nine years until he was convicted there in 1985 of sexually assaulting a 13-year-old, one of three teens he was accused at the time of sexually assaulting.

Earl moved to Texas after his release from a Nevada prison and was living in New Braunfels, working as a self-employed computer systems administrator.

He didn't register as a sex offender when he moved to Texas.

On Oct. 4, 2011, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents working on a national child-porn sweep raided his New Braunfels home and seized 10 computers, eight powerbooks, 61 hard drives, two digital cameras, and numerous compact disks and DVDs.

Investigators found a huge cache of child-porn images, but agents were told to stop counting because they already had amassed the evidence they needed and had to work on other cases that were backing up.

"It was enormous," Assistant U.S. Attorney Tracy Thompson said of the collection.

When Earl was first interviewed, "he admitted to the agents that they would find hundreds of thousands of child porn images. ... It's the largest amount that homeland security agents have ever seen in" South Texas.

His lawyer sought leniency, and Earl told the judge he wanted to teach others about computers.

Besides giving Earl the 30-year, no-parole sentence, U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia also ordered him to serve a lifetime of supervision if he gets out of prison.

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