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## Group Information

Members: 238  
Category: [Police and Law Enforcement](#)  
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Thursday, August 28, 2003

Sun Aug 31, 2003 2:22 am

Ex-sheriff faces child porn charges  
He is accused of downloading illegal pictures from the Internet[Show Message Info](#)By JEFFREY M. BARKER  
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER**Michael Novick**  
<[antiracistaction\\_la@...>](#)  
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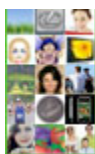
TACOMA -- Former Pierce County Sheriff Mark French was charged yesterday with seven counts of possession of child pornography downloaded from the Internet.

French was allegedly looking at child pornography the morning of April 24 when police served a search warrant at his Tacoma houseboat.

Just two days earlier, he had erased data stored on his personal computer, according to court documents. Yesterday's charges stem from the pictures police say French was looking at when they knocked on his door that April morning.

French's arrest stems from a years-long investigation into child pornography Internet sites that began with a federal investigation into a Russian-based site and that has spread to cities across Western Washington.

Tacoma police in April received information from investigators in Dallas and served search warrants at about a dozen locations in the city



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out and  
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and served search warrants at about a dozen locations in the city,  
Tacoma  
police spokesman Mark Fulghum said yesterday.

Statewide, the Seattle-based Internet Crimes Against Children task  
force  
has investigated nearly 1,000 cases.

French, 54, spent 30 years as a law enforcement officer, serving as  
sheriff  
in Pierce County from July 1997 to June 2000.

French -- as are the suspects in other Tacoma cases -- is only  
suspected of  
having accessed the illegal pictures; he is not charged with producing  
or  
distributing them.

Possession of child pornography is a Class C felony. French is  
scheduled  
for arraignment Sept. 10 in Pierce County Superior Court.

Attorney Donald Winskill, who represented French when his  
computer was  
seized last spring, could not be reached after business hours  
yesterday for  
comment.

Calls to Pierce County Prosecutor Gerald Horne's office yesterday  
were not  
returned.

Detectives who searched the computer French shared with his wife  
say they  
found 139 images of teenagers and preteens, many depicting them  
nude or  
engaged in sexual acts.

The images were downloaded from a site on which users can store  
photographs  
and invite others to look at them. Detectives say images from that site  
were downloaded onto French's computer as they walked onto his  
property to  
serve the search warrant that allowed them to confiscate the  
computer.

But French had just two days earlier run a program called Evidence  
Eliminator, which deleted all Internet-related material prior to April  
22,  
2003, according to court documents. A similar program called  
Internet  
Washer Pro was also installed on the computer, detectives said.

Detectives also say they found on the computer a deleted e-mail  
French had  
sent in October 2002 to the administrator of a "lolitas" Web site  
called  
"incesttaboo" seeking help accessing that site and listing the member  
ID  
he'd been assigned.

The News Tribune of Tacoma previously reported on a search  
warrant served  
at French's residence that alleged that French's credit card was used  
22  
times between June and August 2001 to access three child