

Ex-Tempe officer investigated in child porn case

Posted: Friday, September 12, 2008 11:00 pm | Updated: 1:07 pm, Wed Mar 10, 2010.

Tribune |

A former Tempe police officer accused of cyberstalking his ex-girlfriend and attempting to sell nude photos of her is now being investigated for possible child pornography on his computer.

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Curtis Baumgarth, 39, had a search warrant placed on numerous electronic devices in July, including his computer and other storage media. The search warrant was placed after investigators in the first case said they discovered suspicious files in Baumgarth's computer. In the search warrant affidavit, an officer said 50 files on Baumgarth's computer contained the words "lolita" or "teen," which are often used to describe child pornography. The files had not been viewed by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, but some titles included "Casting Couch Teens" and "R. Kelly Sex Tape" - which included the tag "underage girl."

According to Assistant Attorney General Gail Thackeray, the child porn investigation has not yet been substantiated.

"From a file name, you can't tell for sure," Thackeray said.

The trial date for Baumgarth's cyberstalking charge is set for November, she said. Baumgarth has not been charged with anything related to child pornography. Thackeray said she would receive the computer forensic information in the next few weeks and possible additional charges in the first case could arise from the information.

Baumgarth's attorney, Craig Penrod, said his client pleaded not guilty to the cyberstalking charge and will continue to fight the allegations against him. Penrod would not comment further on either allegation.

According to Tempe police spokesman Sgt. Scott Smith, Baumgarth was terminated from the police force on May 22. Smith cited misconduct alleged and sustained within an internal investigation. Smith said the department would not comment on the criminal case. In police reports, Baumgarth was accused of stalking a girlfriend through numerous text messages, e-mails and phone calls in February.

Baumgarth threatened to share nude photos of the woman if she refused to have sex with him, according to court documents. He later sent the images to some of the woman's friends after she refused to comply. At one point, documents show that Baumgarth attempted to sell sexually explicit pictures featuring his girlfriend through eBay.

The Tribune reported earlier that Baumgarth's police personnel records show he had a history of insubordination and dishonesty. The records show in one instance he hit another car with his vehicle and failed to report it. He also spent 24 hours on the Internet over 22 days of work while clocking eight overtime hours, records show. He was demoted from his position in 2005 following these and other incidents.