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Novato investigator indicted on more porn charges

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A state criminal investigator from Novato who was arrested on child porn allegations last month has been indicted on additional federal charges.

Special Agent Jeffrey David Schinkel, 34, was indicted by a federal grand jury this week on charges of receipt of child pornography, distribution of child pornography and possession of child pornography, according to documents filed with the U.S. attorney's office in San Francisco.

The indictment supplants a complaint prosecutors filed in December charging Schinkel with a single count, possession of child porn.

Schinkel pleaded not guilty to the indictment during an appearance Thursday in U.S. District Court.

"It's really hard to make any kind of general or specific conclusions about it because there hasn't been a lot of (evidence) provided yet," said Schinkel's lawyer, Edwin Prather. "We're still waiting to understand what the evidence consists of. I'm reserving judgment."

Schinkel, an investigator for the state Department of Justice, was arrested Dec. 5 after an eight-month investigation by federal agents in San Francisco and Phoenix.

According to federal prosecutors, Schinkel sent an undercover agent for Immigration and Customs Enforcement an invitation to join a members-only Web site offering child pornography. His alleged actions were not part of any investigations for the Department of Justice, authorities said.

After Schinkel's arrest, the state Department of Justice suspended his "peace officer powers," confiscated his equipment and credentials and opened an internal investigation, the agency said.

On the receipt and distribution charges leveled by the grand jury, Schinkel faces a mandatory minimum of five years in prison on each count, and a potential maximum of 20 years, plus up to \$250,000 in fines for each count. On the possession charges, he faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

He would also have to register as a sex offender if convicted.

Schinkel remains in custody at the federal jail in Dublin. He returns to court Feb. 3 for further hearings.

"We're all trying to stay positive," Prather said. "He has the support of his family and friends. These are heavy allegations."

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Contact Gary Klien via e-mail at gklien@marinij.com. For more crime news, visit the Marin IJ's crime blog, "The Underbelly," at <http://blogs.marinij.com/underbelly>

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