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L.A. NOW

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA -- THIS JUST IN

Veteran LAPD officer, 54, charged with possession of child pornography

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A veteran Los Angeles Police Department officer has been charged with possessing pornographic images of children.

John Deegan, 54, a patrol officer assigned to the LAPD Central Division, was charged by a federal grand jury with two counts of possession of child pornography, according to a copy of an indictment filed in U.S. District Court.

The indictment also includes two charges of possession of child pornography against Deegan's 25-year-old son, Jonathon. Both turned themselves in to authorities on Oct. 5, when they were formally arrested and charged, law enforcement officials said.

A federal judge released the pair on their own recognizance. They are scheduled to be arraigned tomorrow.

John Deegan, who has been an LAPD officer for 22 years, was relieved of duty in March when FBI agents alerted police officials that he was under investigation, said Deputy Chief Mark Perez, head of the department's Professional Service Bureau.

Deegan has been receiving his full pay since being suspended and will continue to be paid throughout his trial unless he is denied bail and jailed, Perez said.

Paul M. Weber, president of the union that represents rank-and-file officers, cautioned against a rush to judgment before Deegan's trial is completed, but released an unusually strident statement about the case.

"While the arrest is embarrassing to the men and women of the LAPD and the city, our message to the community is unequivocal: Anyone who does anything that might endanger the welfare of a child has no place in the LAPD."

Federal authorities first came to suspect the younger Deegan of receiving and sending illicit images and video on the Internet, said law enforcement authorities familiar with the case who requested their names not be used because the investigation was ongoing.

When FBI agents served a search warrant on the Long Beach house that father and son share, they found a trove of material on a computer owned by Jonathon Deegan, and discovered child porn images on the elder Deegan's computer as well, the sources said. Father and son did not return a message left at their home.

-- Joel Rubin and Andrew Blankstein

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