



Leonard used cell phone to download child porn

Published: Thursday, November 11, 2010, 7:35 AM Updated: Thursday, November 11, 2010, 8:18 AM



By **Cherie Ward - The Mississippi Press**

PASCAGOULA -- Former Ocean Springs patrolman Lee John Leonard used a cell phone as a wireless router and tapped into public wireless Internet servers to download child pornography to his police-issued laptop, investigators said Wednesday.

By running the wireless servers through his phone first and not hooking directly from the computer to the service, Leonard most likely thought his co-workers would be unaware that he had saved imagines of young boys and girls in sexual situations on his police laptop, Sheriff's investigator Hope Thornton said.

"He though he could get away with it," Thornton said. "They all think they can get away with it. He would go to coffee shops and restaurants while he was working. Nothing went through the city servers. He was using public servers and during working hours."

The 46-year-old was arrested at his north Escatawpa home Tuesday afternoon by county investigators and charged with six counts of possession of child porn.

Other charges could follow as the investigation continues and his home computer is analyzed, detectives said in



Cherie Ward

Former police officer Lee John Leonard, 46, leaves the Jackson County Courthouse in Pascagoula on Wednesday following an initial hearing before county Judge Larry Wilson. Leonard was charged Tuesday with six counts of downloading child pornography. Wilson set a total bail for Leonard at \$150,000.

court.

Thornton said any other charges would be presented to a Jackson County grand jury.

Leonard's supervisors suspected misconduct about a month ago and launched an internal investigation.

Leonard resigned from the Ocean Springs force Oct. 14 abruptly and in the middle of the night amid the probe.

"Ocean Springs acted correctly," Thornton said. "Only he, and he alone, knew what he was doing."

Before his three-year employment with the Ocean Springs department, Leonard worked for the Sheriff's Department for about 15 years, Sheriff Mike Byrd said.

Byrd said shortly after Leonard resigned from Ocean Springs, he applied at the sheriff's department as a patrol deputy, but was denied.

Leonard was in court Wednesday morning and County Judge Larry Wilson set a total bail at \$150,000, or \$25,000 on each count.

Leonard looked away from media cameras and often covered his face with his hands or a piece of paper that lists his charges.

Byrd said Leonard spent Tuesday night in the Jackson County Adult Detention Center in protective custody, but would be transferred Wednesday following his court appearance to an undisclosed jail for safety reasons.

The images discovered on Leonard's police laptop were adult pornography photos and movies as well as child porn with children as young as two years old, Thornton said.

"It's heartbreaking," she said. "To know that someone of authority can do this to themselves, the agencies. It's a disgrace. So far, he's been very remorseful."

Byrd said Leonard's actions humiliated all of the law enforcement officials within the county.

"Today, all of our badges are tarnished," Byrd said.

© 2011 gulflive.com. All rights reserved.