

## Derek Walton, Franklin County Sheriff's reserve deputy, charged with child exploitation

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LIBERTY, Ind. - A Franklin County Sheriff's Office reserve deputy faces child exploitation charges after a federal investigation.

Joseph H. Hogsett, a United States Attorney, unsealed the criminal complaint Monday against Derek Walton, 31, of Liberty.

Walton's arrest was the result of an Operation Community Watch investigation into email accounts dating back to 2011 that allegedly sent images and video of child pornography, according to Hogsett. Some of those emails, Hogsett stated, were sent from an account accessed from the Franklin County Security Center.

"These cases are always difficult, both as a prosecutor and as a parent," Hogsett said. "They are even more troubling when the allegations involve a law enforcement official who was entrusted with protecting Hoosier communities. This is what Operation Community Watch was designed to do, however – hold accountable those who endanger our children, no matter who they are."

A search warrant executed at Walton's home on Aug. 16 as a result of the email investigation also revealed a thumb drive and video camera with images of a minor girl in Walton's possession, Hogsett stated. In addition, materials also revealed Walton may have been involved in a white supremacist group. The investigation is ongoing.

Walton worked with the Franklin County Sheriff's office since 2004, according to the criminal complaint. He also formerly served with the Richmond and Laurel police departments.

Hogsett stated an initial AOL account linked to Walton was disconnected in 2011. A second account traced to Walton was found while federal agents were investigating a sexual offender who exchanged emails with him.

Walton faces decades in federal prison if convicted, Senior Litigation Counsel Steven D. DeBrot and Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary A Myers stated.

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