

New Britain Twp. Cops: Ex-Berks police chief had child porn

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By Matt Coughlin Staff Writer

A former Berks County police chief living in Bedminster allegedly shared child pornography over the Internet and, following an investigation by New Britain Township police, turned himself in Tuesday.

Robert Geist, 44, of the 2000 block of Bedminster Road, formerly the chief of police in Brecknock Township, Berks County, surrendered Tuesday to charges of possession and distribution of child pornography and related offenses, New Britain Township police said.

Police said their investigation began in June when a New Britain Township detective, working as part of the PA Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and the FBI's Child Exploitation Task Force, found a computer sharing files of child pornography over the Internet. The detective downloaded the files, they were analyzed and it was determined they depicted children under the age of 18, police said.

Investigators reportedly tracked the computer to Bedminster and served a search warrant at Geist's home. During the search, a Penndel officer also on both task forces, noticed a computer in the home was running a file deletion program, which he stopped, police said.

Geist was arraigned Tuesday before District Judge Robert Schnell Jr. and released on \$25,000 unsecured bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Jan. 17.

Geist was appointed chief of police in Brecknock in 2011 and was fired in October 2012, according to township records. Geist remained on the township payroll until March. Published reports indicated he was fired for what supervisors described as "violations of department policy."

The newspaper was unsuccessful in attempts to reach Brecknock Township officials for comment Tuesday.