

## Ex-Mansfield cop arrested in child porn case

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**MANSFIELD** — A former Mansfield police officer is among more than two dozen people arrested by federal agencies in a national child pornography case.

Robert Anderson of 2375 Ohio 603, Lucas, was arrested Feb. 7 on allegations he knowingly received and distributed child pornography, according to a complaint filed in the Northern District United States District Court.

Anderson, 69, was a patrol officer for the department for 25 years, retiring in September of 2000, according to city finance records.

“What he did in his retirement years is not a reflection of the men and women that work at the Mansfield Police Department,” Police Chief Ken Coontz commented. “It’s a disgraceful act no matter who gets charged with it.”

A hearing has not yet been scheduled, but if Anderson is convicted of the charge, he could get 10 years or more in prison. His court-appointed attorneys, Charles Fleming and Edward Bryan, could not be reached for comment.

“The weight of the evidence against the defendant is substantial, including images seized under a search warrant and a confession,” Anderson’s detention order said. “There is evidence that the defendant unsuccessfully attempted to hide additional storage devices containing illicit images of minors after his arrest.

“Although the defendant has no prior criminal history and long-established ties to the community, these are insufficient to overcome the statutory presumption in the light of the foregoing.”

The arrest was the result of an investigation that spanned three years and involved the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Cyber Crimes Center, Child Exploitation Investigations Unit, Victim Identification Program, as well as various international law enforcement agencies, the complaint said.

Through the investigation, at least 24 people were identified as possible users of a website, identified only as “Website A.” Authorities said the site allows people to post, distribute and trade sexually explicit images of children. In many cases, according to the report, users also exchanged emails for the purpose of distributing more images.

The website is hosted outside of the United States.

“Often evidence from the images, and comments posted about the album (either by other individuals or the member who created the album), indicates that the particular poster or person who created the album has a sexual interest in children,” the complaint said, “and

that these individuals' interest in Website A lies in the ability to meet other individuals for the private trading of child pornography."

In June 2012, Homeland Security Investigations obtained data from the website — including usernames, album names, passwords, comments and associated email addresses and IP logs — that helped lead to Anderson's arrest.

A "Website A" member account authorities believe to be run by Anderson, titled "bob1431b," reportedly contained six albums with at least 44 photos of young girls' underwear and prepubescent teens in the nude, the complaint stated.

One of the albums, entitled "preview," was found to contain 38 images, most or all including a pubescent teenager suspected to be from north central Ohio, the complaint said.

Attached to one of the photos was a comment from "bob1431b" saying, "email me for trades, I have many hot vids and pics, some homemade and hidden cam," according to the complaint.

The investigation notes that user "bob1431b" last modified his albums in October 2012, but when authorities accessed "Website A" on Jan. 15, 2014, it was determined that the user "continued to remain active and to maintain a profile and the same or similar albums on the website," the complaint said.

A gmail account also linked to the website's username and traced back to Anderson revealed another 25 images and four videos containing child pornography, the complaint said.

The evidence indicated Anderson had traded child pornography with at least two other Internet users between Sept. 18 and Nov. 18, 2013. In one of the exchanges, Anderson sent nine image attachments, three of which constituted child pornography, the report said.

When Homeland Security Investigations agents raided Anderson's home Feb. 6 and conducted an on-site preview of a thumb drive computer media device, they reported finding several other images of suspected child pornography.

Anderson admitted, according to the complaint, that he registered the email address and was the sole user of the computers in the home.

He also agreed to an interview with FBI Agent Lance Fragomeli, in which he "admitted to receiving and sending files containing child pornography. Anderson also admitted that he had saved some of these images and had created a collection which he had hidden away," the complaint said.