

Florida 'Officer of the Year' arrested for child porn

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nydailynews.com

2015 Cop Pedophile Michael Harding



cbs12

A Florida cop once named "Officer of the Year" was arrested by federal agents for distributing child porn -- and uploading the smut on the job, court documents show.

Port St. Lucie Officer Michael Harding was charged Wednesday with sending and receiving child porn after undercover Homeland Security investigators discovered his filth-ridden account on the app Kik

messenger, authorities said.

The 27-year-old married father of three posted explicit material to the Kik chatroom #toddlerf**k while stationed in his police vehicle on patrol on the overnight shift beginning on July 23, according to an affidavit.

A Homeland Security Investigator stumbled onto posts Harding made under the name destheabovee showing young girls in sex acts with men, the affidavit said. The account was later linked to Harding's IP address and cell phone number, investigators said.

A search of Harding's home found hundreds of child porn photos and videos on a thumb drive, which had been hidden in a gun case in the bedroom, the affidavit said. Another thumb drive showed 23 sexually explicit pictures had been deleted, investigators said.

The thumb drives had images of boys and girls between about pre-school age and prepubescence, investigators said.

Harding was taken into custody Tuesday evening and appointed a public defender Wednesday after telling a judge he had \$3,000 in his bank account, WPTV reported. A judge did not set bond because Harding is considered a danger to the community.

Harding was named Officer of the Year while working for the Fort Pierce Police Department in 2011. He quit Fort Pierce to work for Port St. Lucie in August 2012, the department said. He did not provide proper notice of his resignation, leaving him not in good standing with Fort Pierce.

Harding was placed on administrative leave without pay pending an investigation after his arrest, Port St. Lucie Police Chief John Bolduc told reporters Wednesday. When the department first learned of the investigation Tuesday morning, he was placed on paid leave.

"These charges are very serious and I think it goes without saying that this type of behavior will not and is not tolerated in this department," Bolduc said. later calling the charges "disturbing."

He said the charges were shocking because Harding had passed hiring tests, including a polygraph test, as an "accomplished" officer. The department has about 280 employees, CBS 12 reported.

Department spokesman Frank Sabol told the Daily News he couldn't comment on the federal charges but noted Harding had no disciplinary action against him in his three years with Port St. Lucie.

In Fort Pierce, Harding received counseling twice in 2012 for not checking or completing online trainings.

Nestor Yglesias, the spokesman for Homeland Security Investigations in Miami, said he could not release more information because of the ongoing investigation and criminal case.

Yglesias said "it's not uncommon" for Homeland Security to handle child porn investigations, which is "one of our priorities."

Under the investigative program Predator, there have been more than 8,000 criminal arrests connected to child sex predators since 2003.