

Pa. police chief facing charges in child sex sting after agent posed as 14-year-old girl

The police chief of a small town in western Pennsylvania has been arrested for trying to set up a sexual encounter with an undercover agent he allegedly thought was a 14-year-old girl.

According to local media, Michael Diebold, the top crimefighter in Leechburg, 35 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, used an online messaging service to send lewd photos and solicited sexual contact from an undercover agent posing as a teen girl. The chief also made plans to meet the officer posing as the girl, according to the state's attorney general's office.



When Diebold arrived where he was supposed to meet the teenager Friday in Westmoreland County, agents from the state's child predator agency arrested him, [the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported](#).

Daniel Block, the agent posing as the 14-year-old, repeatedly mentioned his fictional age, Block wrote in an affidavit [quoted by local TV station WPLG](#). But, he said, Diebold continued to try to develop the relationship.

In a statement quoted by the *Post-Gazette*, Pennsylvania Attorney General

Josh Shapiro said that, "This case is particularly heinous because the perpetrator is a public official, sworn to serve and protect the community. We have a zero-tolerance policy for the sexual abuse of children and my office will prosecute any offender to the fullest extent of the law, no matter who they are."

Diebold, 40, is being held in Westmoreland County Prison on a bail of \$500,000, [the New York Times reported](#). Diebold is scheduled to appear in court on Jan. 16 and will plead not guilty, his lawyer told the *Times*.

However, the *Times* quoted court records showing Diebold told investigators he knew it was wrong to have sexual contact with a 14-year-old is and said his life was "totally over."

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Shapiro's office said Friday that Diebold had been charged with unlawful contact with a minor and criminal attempt to commit involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, both felonies.

The Leechburg Police Department has three full-time officers, including Diebold, and 15 part-time officers, [according to its website](#).

At the time of the arrest, Diebold was on paid leave, the *Post-Gazette* reported, having lost his left hand and part of his forearm in June when a mortar misfired as he was lighting fireworks for the Leechburg Volunteer

Fire Company's annual carnival.

Danielle Reinke Diebold, Diebold's wife, [told local TV station KDKA](#) on Sunday that she was "completely blindsided" by the incident.

Her life had been completely shattered, she said in a statement.

"He was the first man ever in my life who never made me question, never gave me a gut feeling, never a bad instinct or sign and we were even in the process of planning to extend our family.

"This is not who we knew. We knew a loving, caring father and husband and we are grieving the loss of that man," she said. "I will never find the right words to say but I want to say I am truly so sorry to everyone out there including any minor that may have been involved, our community, family and friends."

The couple got married last July, 12 weeks after their son, Kyle, was born, and a few weeks after the fireworks accident.