

New Bedford Police Officer Indicted On Child Pornography Offenses

A New Bedford police officer was indicted by a federal grand jury in Boston today on charges of possessing and distributing child pornography.

Paul Hodson, 42, of Acushnet, was indicted on one count of distribution of child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography. On June 12, 2019, Hodson was arrested and charged by criminal complaint and has been in custody since. An arraignment date has not yet been scheduled.

Following an investigation into the use of peer-to-peer file sharing networks for the trade of child pornography, a federal search warrant was executed at Hodson's Acushnet home. Hodson was interviewed on-scene and admitted to using peer-to-peer file sharing software to trade child pornography. In the course of a preliminary on-scene forensic preview of Hodson's computer, hundreds of child pornography files were recovered, including at least one file that was distributed to undercover law enforcement in the course of the investigation that led to the search warrant.

The charge of distribution of child pornography provides for a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and up to 20 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of possession of child pornography provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling and Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Massachusetts State Police and the Acushnet Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne Paruti, Lelling's Project Safe Childhood Coordinator and a member of the Major Crimes Unit, is prosecuting the case.

The case is brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.