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Investigators: Paterson police officer arrested on child pornography charges

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2011 LAST UPDATED: THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2011, 7:30 PM

BY MARLENE NAANES AND MICHELLE LEE
STAFF WRITERS

THE RECORD

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PATERSON — Investigators arrested a five-year veteran city police officer on child pornography charges Thursday, culminating a three-month investigation, the [Passaic County](#) Sheriff's Department said.

Officer James R. Berthold, 39, of [Paterson](#), was arrested at his home without incident at 11 a.m. The patrolman was arrested on possession of child pornography, [Passaic County](#) Sheriff Richard Berdnik said in a statement.



Officer James R. Berthold, 39, of Paterson, was arrested at his home without incident.

"Possession and distribution of child pornography is a serious matter even more alarming and disturbing."

The three-month investigation began late last year when nine reports from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children concerning the distribution of inappropriate images to a sheriff's office said in a statement.

The prosecutor's office forwarded its findings to the [Passaic County](#) Sheriff's Department, which launched an investigation and found the 12 images were allegedly transmitted from Berthold's computer and e-mail address, the statement said.

Bill Maer, spokesman for the [Passaic County](#) Sheriff's Department, said Berthold was sent to the [Passaic County](#) jail on a \$75,000 bail set by Superior Court Judge Marilyn C. Clark. He was transferred to the [Bergen County](#) jail Thursday evening because of the nature of his job, Maer said.

He said none of the criminal allegations against Berthold are work related and additional criminal charges are pending.

Lt. Alex Popov, a [Paterson](#) police spokesman, said a department investigation is ongoing and Police Chief James Wittig and the internal affairs division cooperated with the [Passaic County](#) Sheriff's Department. Popov said Berthold is under suspension pending the outcome of the investigation.

The police department was surprised and shocked by the nature of the allegations against Berthold, Popov said. He said Berthold was assigned to the patrol division and was a good employee as far as he could tell.

The [Passaic County](#) Prosecutor's Office and the [Paterson](#) Police Department Internal Affairs Division assisted in the investigation. Berthold may face additional charges when the results of a forensic analysis are finished, Berdnik said.

PBA President Detective Steve Olimpio did not know if Berthold had an attorney.

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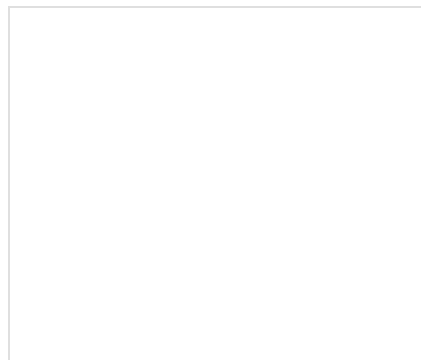
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"We're concerned about the allegations and the arrest," Olimpio said. "We hope they're not true. Everyone is innocent until proven guilty. It's serious stuff. These are issues that I don't think anyone wants to talk about."

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