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Ex-Police Officer Sentenced for Online Offences Against a Child

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— Categories: Crime



A retired police officer has received a suspended sentence for a series of serious offences, including sending explicit images to an undercover officer he believed was a 12-year-old girl. Michael Gear, 65, of Totton, was also found to be in possession of a significant number of indecent images of children. The charges against him stem from an investigation that saw him communicate with an undercover officer online.

The case came to light following a sting operation by East Midlands police, who were investigating online chatrooms. An undercover officer, posing as a mother named 'Jenny',

engaged in conversation with Gear. The officer told Gear that she was a mother of three and eventually said she had passed her phone to her 12-year-old daughter, 'Olive'. Gear then proceeded to send explicit pictures and a video of himself to the person he believed was the child.

Gear, a former Hampshire police officer who retired a decade ago, was quickly identified and arrested by the officers running the operation. A search of his home and phone uncovered more disturbing material.

Officers found a total of 27 sickening images of children, with the children's ages ranging from one to eight years old. Police categorised the images into levels of severity: six were classified as Category A, the worst type, three as Category B, and ten as Category C. Additionally, eight extreme images were found on his phone.

Judge Nigel Peters, King's Counsel, condemned Gear's actions at Southampton Crown Court. The judge noted that people like Gear contribute to the worldwide corruption of children. Addressing the former officer directly, Judge Peters said, "You have been in court before, but this is the first time you have fallen foul of the law. If it wasn't for people like you who watch these things, they would not be distributed or marketed."

Prosecutor Gary Venturi explained how the conversation between Gear and the undercover officer unfolded. Mr Venturi stated that while in a chatroom, Gear's "conversation rapidly and rabidly progressed to Jenny's three children, one of them he was told was named Olive." He continued, "He then proceeded to try and engage Olive, still the decoy officer, in a conversation, and he believed the phone had been given to the girl aged 12."

Gear was admitted to several charges, including three counts of making indecent images of children, possessing extreme pornographic images, attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child, arranging or facilitating a child sex offence, and attempting to cause a child under 13 to look at an image of sexual activity.

Gear was given a 12-month sentence for his crimes, suspended for 18 months. He must also complete 40 rehabilitation days and will be placed on the sex offenders' register for ten years. Furthermore, he was ordered to pay a £1,110 fine and £500 in prosecution costs. The offences took place between May 30 and August 5 of last year.