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Illinois Trooper Arrested in Child Porn Case

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Federal authorities have charged Illinois State Police trooper Colin Gruenke with possession and distribution of child pornography.

Colin Gruenke, 38, of Deerfield, was taken into custody after investigators alleged he used messaging applications to share explicit images of children. Gruenke has been placed on unpaid administrative leave while the Illinois State Police conducts an internal investigation and cooperates with federal authorities.

According to federal court documents, the investigation began after the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a tip from a mobile messaging company in September 2024. The report indicated that an email address associated with an IP address linked to Gruenke's residence was used to upload and distribute child pornography over three days.

The Department of Homeland Security initiated a full investigation in May 2025. Agents confronted Gruenke at the Illinois State Police office in Des Plaines, Illinois, where they seized his iPhone. Officials stated that the device contained multiple images depicting nude

children. A subsequent search of his home uncovered a flash drive containing approximately 200 video files of child pornography, according to the criminal complaint.

In addition to his role as a state trooper, Gruenke had also served as a youth hockey referee. Photographic evidence indicates he officiated during the 2018 Illinois State High School hockey championship. His involvement with young athletes has raised concerns among parents and community members.

Law enforcement officials emphasized the importance of vigilance in monitoring individuals who hold positions of public authority and have access to children. The Illinois State Police have pledged full cooperation with federal authorities while conducting their internal review.

The federal charges carry significant penalties, reflecting the severity of crimes against children. Authorities have stressed that protecting minors remains a top priority, and individuals in trusted roles will face the full weight of the law if they exploit that position.

Gruenke's arrest highlights ongoing concerns about child exploitation cases nationwide, with federal investigators pointing to the critical role of reporting mechanisms and digital tracking in identifying offenders. Officials reiterated that community awareness and swift reporting of suspicious online activity remain key in preventing abuse.

The case is moving forward in federal court, where Gruenke faces charges that could result in lengthy prison time if convicted.