

Ex-FBI agent agrees to plead guilty in national security leak

-, 24.09.2013, 03:08 Time

USPA News - A former FBI bomb technician who later worked as a government contractor for the agency has agreed to plead guilty to disclosing top secret information about a disrupted terrorist plot to the Associated Press news agency, prosecutors announced on Monday. Donald John Sachtleben, 55, of Carmel, Indiana, filed a petition on Monday to plead guilty to unlawfully disclosing national defense information to an AP reporter.

He earlier also pled guilty to charges of possessing and distributing child pornography resulting from a separate investigation last year. The plea agreements call for Sachtleben to be sentenced to a total of more than 11.5 year in prison, including a 43-month prison term for two national security offenses and a consecutive 97-month term for two child pornography charges. The deal is still subject to the court's approval. According to the documents, Sachtleben knowingly and willfully disclosed national defense information to an AP reporter on May 2, 2012, just over a week before he would be arrested on child pornography charges. The criminal information also charges him with willfully retaining documents relating to the national defense without authorization. Sachtleben worked for the FBI from 1983 through 2008, during which he was a Special Agent Bomb Technician and was assigned to work on many major cases involving terrorism. In his work as an FBI employee, Sachtleben held a Top Secret security clearance and had regular access to classified and national defense information relating to the FBI's activities, as well as the activities of other members of the U.S. intelligence community. In 2008, Sachtleben retired from the FBI and was rehired as a contractor but maintained his Top Secret security clearance because of his official responsibilities. As a result, he continued to have regular access to classified and national defense information relating to the FBI's activities, as well as the activities of other members of the U.S. intelligence community. As a contractor, he routinely visited the FBI Lab in Quantico, Virginia. One of the criminal charges involves Sachtleben's contacts with the AP reporter relating to the disruption of a plot to conduct a suicide bomb attack on a U.S.-bound airliner by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the recovery by the U.S. of a bomb in connection with that plot. As a result of Sachtleben's disclosure of top secret information, prosecutors alleged the national security of the United States was compromised, a significant international intelligence operation was placed in jeopardy, and lives were put at risk. Sachtleben was identified as a suspect in the case of the unauthorized disclosure after toll records for phone numbers related to the reporter were obtained through a subpoena and compared to other evidence collected during the leak investigation. This allowed investigators to obtain a search warrant authorizing a more exhaustive search of Sachtleben's cell phone, computer, and other electronic media, which were in the possession of federal investigators due to the child pornography investigation. In the child pornography investigation, prosecutors said federal and state investigators became aware of an individual trading images of child pornography online in September 2010. An extensive investigation into that individual led to the arrest of a defendant in Illinois in January 2012. Upon arrest, a forensic search of that defendant's computer equipment and email accounts allegedly revealed that he had been actively trading the explicit materials online with numerous other people. Based on that information, law enforcement traced the alleged online activity to Sachtleben's home in Carmel. After conducting several days of surveillance, a search warrant was executed on May 11, 2012, by law enforcement officers from the Indiana State Police and the FBI Cyber Crime Task Force. Sachtleben was charged in the Southern District of Indiana with possession and distribution of child pornography. The complaint alleges that an initial forensic examination of Sachtleben's laptop computer revealed the presence of approximately 30 images and video files containing child pornography. A number of files identified during this initial search matched those that had been found in the course of investigating the Illinois defendant.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1461/ex-fbi-agent-agrees-to-plead-guilty-in-national-security-leak.html>

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