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Chief arrested at alleged brothel Runnemede's police chief and five others were caught in a prostitution sting in Maple Shade, officials said.

January 27, 2004 | By Joel Bewley and Troy Graham INQUIRER STAFF WRITERS

The longtime chief of the Runnemede Police Department was among those caught in a prostitution sting yesterday at a Maple Shade brothel, police said.

James Martin Leason, 56, was arrested around noon as he left an apartment at the Arbors Apartments on South Lenola Road, police said.

Also arrested, police said, were the brothel's madam, two prostitutes and two others.

The investigation revealed that Leason, a repeat customer, went there yesterday to have sex with a specific woman, police said. She was not there, but Leason "engaged in various sex acts" with another woman, according authorities. Maple Shade and state police were involved in the operation.

Story continues below.

Leason was charged with misconduct in office and promoting prostitution. Bail was set at \$5,000, and he was released on his own recognizance. Combined, the charges carry a maximum of 15 years in prison and \$165,000 in fines.

Police searched the apartment after Leason's arrest.

Leason could not be reached for comment last night.

The Runnemede department's next-in-command, Lt. Mark Diano, learned of the arrest from a reporter last night. Diano said he did not work yesterday, but stopped by the office and did not see the chief. He assumed Leason also took the day off.

"I'm dumbfounded," he said. "I don't know what to tell you. I have no idea what I'll walk into tomorrow."

Chris Ferrari, the president of the Camden County Police Chiefs' Association, said he was "flabbergasted" by the news of Leason's arrest.

"He's the only chief I can remember from Runnemede," Ferrari said. "To my personal knowledge, he's an excellent chief."

Dolores Crozier, 66, also known as Dee Conroy, who police said managed the brothel, was charged with promoting prostitution. Her address was not released.

Two women who police said worked as prostitutes - Kimberly Lee LaCrosse, 37, of Tamaqua, Pa.; and Veronica Farias, 21, of New York - were booked on the same charge.

Two alleged patrons were also charged with promoting prostitution, police said. They were Oresta Delia, 48, of Voorhees; and Gerald Creitz, 40, of Collingswood.

The brothel was thought to have been operating since July.

Jerry Dougherty, who has lived at the Arbors since 1996, said prostitution and drugs were common problems.

"It doesn't surprise me. All sorts of things go on around here," he said. "I've seen so much I could write a great novel."

News of the arrest was released after business hours last night by the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office. It is not clear whether Leason was on duty at the time of his arrest.

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The Prosecutor's Office indicated that Runnemede officials were told about the arrest.

Councilman Anthony M. Beatrice said last night that borough officials were sorting through the details. He said no meeting had been called to discuss the chief's arrest "but that doesn't mean we won't have one."

"We'll see what tomorrow brings," he said.

The Runnemede Police Department has 20 officers, according to its Web site. Leason has been chief since January 1987, and a department employee before that.

The department was praised last year for solving the cold case of Patricia Parkin, a 29-year-old Camden County College student and mother who was murdered in 1995.

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