

Officer in prostitution case placed on paid leave

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By Sadie Gurman, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A veteran Pittsburgh police officer charged Monday with operating a prostitution service and other crimes has been placed on paid administrative leave, the police bureau said today.

Allegheny County police charged Officer Michael Johns, 43, of Brookline, with offenses including promoting prostitution, drug possession and delivery, conspiracy, obstruction of justice and insurance fraud. Police said he rented cars for prostitutes to do business, helped them obtain heroin and paid for online ads promoting their work.

Officer Johns, on the city's force for 16 years, often drove the women to purchase heroin and would let them inject it and get high in his house, police said. In a sting arranged over the weekend, police said they watched him drive a pair of women to the North Side in a taxi cab so they could purchase the drug.

The officer also faces internal police bureau charges, spokeswoman Diane Richard said. He had been working in the warrant office since shortly after county police began their probe. A criminal complaint suggests the investigation began after an April traffic stop of one of the cars the officer had rented.

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