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NEWS



Federal Judge Sentences Former Minister To 25 Years In Prison For Engaging In Illicit Sexual Contact In A Foreign Place

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 3, 2013

United States Attorney Anne M. Tompkins Western District of North Carolina

The Gaston County Man Abused Minors While On Mission Trips In Haiti

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – U.S. District Judge Robert J. Conrad, Jr. sentenced a former minister to 25 years in prison today for engaging in illicit sexual conduct while on mission trips in Haiti, announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina and Brock D. Nicholson, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Larry Michael Bollinger, 68, of Gastonia, N.C., was also ordered to serve a lifetime under court supervision following his prison term and to register as a sex offender. Bollinger pleaded guilty in January 2013 to two counts of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign place.

According to filed court documents and today's sentencing hearing, Bollinger was a former minister who performed missionary work in Haiti. Court records show that Bollinger travelled regularly to Haiti because of his involvement with the Lazarus Project, a charity that supports two charitable organizations in the country, the Hope House and The Village of Hope School. According to court records and court proceedings, from in or about August 2009 to October 2009, Bollinger sexually molested four Haitian females, between the ages of 11 and 16. Court records indicate that one of the victims said that Bollinger offered to pay her food and money in exchange for sexual acts.

"Bollinger is a sexual predator who used his missionary work as a cover to hide the heinous sexual abuse he perpetrated on the innocent children of an impoverished country. Prosecutors and law enforcement worked tirelessly to bring this monster to justice, and even though today's sentence cannot undo the harm Bollinger inflicted upon his young victims, it is a clear message that our justice system will protect children beyond our borders," said U.S. Attorney Tompkins.

"The defendant betrayed the trust placed in him by his congregation, his charity and, most importantly, by the children he was supposedly helping in Haiti," said Brock D. Nicholson, Special Agent in Charge of HSI Atlanta, who oversees Georgia and the Carolinas. "For the damage he has caused in these young lives, the defendant has earned every minute of this sentence. HSI special agents will continue to stand strong against child predators who prey upon the innocent, no matter where those children might be found."

Judge Conrad called Bollinger's crimes "heinous" before handing down the 25 year prison term following a daylong sentencing hearing. The final restitution amount to Bollinger's victims will be determined by the Court within the next 90 days.

Bollinger has been in federal custody since he was charged in May 2012. He will be transferred to the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a federal facility. Federal sentences are served without the possibility of parole.

The investigation was conducted by ICE-HSI. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimlani M. Ford of the Western District of North Carolina and Trial Attorney Michael W. Grant of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS).

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section

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(CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafefchildhood.gov.

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