



Department of Justice

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SCOTTSBURG MAN SENTENCED TO 75 YEARS FOR PRODUCTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

PRESS RELEASE

NEW ALBANY, IN - Mark Armstrong, 40, Scottsburg, Indiana, was sentenced to 900 months (75 years) in prison late yesterday by U.S. District Chief Judge David F. Hamilton following Armstrong's guilty plea to three counts of production of child pornography. This case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, with assistance from the Fishers (Indiana) Police Department, the Indiana State Police, the Hamilton County (Indiana) Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The investigation began on March 9, 2009, when a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security - Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), temporarily assigned to the Office of the Attaché, Pretoria, South Africa, met with members of South African law enforcement engaged in a child pornography investigation. The ICE agent was advised that South African law enforcement had recently received information relating to three individuals who were exchanging emails containing images of minor children engaging in sexually explicit behavior with adults. South African law enforcement suspected that one of the individuals involved in exchanging these images lived in the United States, and was currently sexually abusing a minor male later identified as John Doe 1. The individual identified himself in the e-mails as Mark Armstrong, and discussed his molestation of John Doe 1. Attached to the e-mails sent by the individual identifying himself as Armstrong were images depicting sexually explicit conduct between an unidentifiable adult male and a minor male later identified as John Doe 1.

On March 10, 2009, this information was forwarded to ICE's Cyber Crime Center (C3). C3 obtained information concerning the e-mail address used by the individual claiming to be Mark Armstrong. The subscriber information listed the user as Mark Armstrong, with an address in Scottsburg, Indiana. On March 20, 2009, C3 forwarded this information to ICE-Indianapolis.

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After obtaining legal process for more information relating to the IP addresses, investigators were able to determine that log-ins to the subject e-mail account were done from the residence of Mark Armstrong.

On April 2, 2009, a search warrant was executed on Mark Armstrong's residence. Armstrong waived his rights, and told investigators that he had been molesting John Doe 1, a minor male relative less than 12 years of age, and had produced and disseminated images of that conduct, including images of sexual acts and conduct. Armstrong also admitted to having produced an unlawful image of John Doe 2, a minor male relative less than 12 years of age.

Armstrong admitted producing each of the images discovered in South Africa, and identified the child depicted as John Doe 1 and the adult depicted as himself. He admitted to producing the images with a digital camera, and exchanging them with individuals he had met online for nude images of other minors. Armstrong recalled sending sexually explicit images of John Doe 1 to individuals Armstrong believed to be in South Africa and in Mexico. Armstrong stated that, in total, he produced approximately 50 images of sexually explicit conduct involving John Does 1 and 2. Armstrong was arrested the day of the search and has remained in custody while the case was pending in United States District Court.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney A. Brant Cook, who prosecuted the case for the government, Chief Judge Hamilton also imposed a lifetime supervised release following Armstrong's completion of his prison sentence. However, because federal prisoners only receive 60 days of "good-time" credit each year, Armstrong will not be eligible for release for more than 62 years. During any period of supervised release, Armstrong must register as a sexual offender for life, must participate in sex offender counseling, and may not have any unsupervised contact with any minor child, among other conditions. Armstrong was fined in the amount of \$25,000.

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 United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (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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