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Brownfield man sentenced for exploitation of minors

Portland, Maine: United States Attorney Paula D. Silsby, announced today that United States District Judge George Z. Singal sentenced Michael A. Berk, 29, most recently of Brownfield, Maine to a total of 200 months incarceration and 5 years of supervised release for convictions for attempted enticement of minors and possession of child pornography. On the morning trial was scheduled to begin, Berk pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(a)(5)(B). After a bench trial, he was convicted of two counts of attempted enticement of a minor in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2422.

The evidence at trial showed that on two separate occasions, Berk attempt to entice two different 12-year old girls into having sex with him. More specifically, the evidence showed that Berk surfed Craigslist looking for potential victims. He identified the mother of one girl and the father of another girl as prospects through ads they posted as parents looking for housing in the mother's case, and for work in the father's case. Berk corresponded with these parents, changed the subject from their search for housing and work to Berk's interest in having sex with their daughters.

In the course of investigating the complaint that he was trying to entice a 12-year old girl to have sex, the police obtained search warrants for Berk's vehicle and for his residence in Brownfield, Maine. From his vehicle and his residence, they recovered, among other things, a laptop computer and 3 hard drive digital storage devices. Forensic analysis of the laptop and hard drives determined that they contained a total of approximately 50,262 still images and approximately 258 videos of child pornography. That child pornography included images of prepubescent children, images of a sadistic nature, including images of very young females being fully penetrated by adult males, and images of bestiality.

In pronouncing sentence, Judge Singal described Berk as a predator, and his conduct as horrendous and observed that he appeared to have no appreciation for the criminality, seriousness, and immorality of his actions, nor any remorse. As a result, the Judge said that a serious term of imprisonment was necessary to protect the public.

United States Attorney Silsby praised the investigative work of the Maine Computer Crimes Task Force, Biddeford Police Department, and United States Secret Service.

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