



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2010

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WHITE COUNTY MAN TO SERVE 30 YEAR SENTENCE IN CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CASE

Little Rock, AR - Jane W. Duke, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that Joseph Mulherin, age 21, was sentenced by United States District Judge James M. Moody to 360 months imprisonment for producing child pornography. Mulherin's term of imprisonment will be followed by supervised release for the remainder of his life.

"On Monday, Attorney General Eric Holder announced a new national strategy to combat child exploitation in order to protect our children from those who produce and trade child pornography. This initiative reinforces Project Safe Childhood, which was launched in 2006 to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. Our office, together with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, is committed to aggressively investigating and prosecuting those who seek to target our children. As a result of the collaboration between federal and local law enforcement, Joseph Mulherin was sentenced to a significant federal prison term with no parole," stated Duke. "We are so very fortunate to have valuable law enforcement partners such as the White County Sheriff's Office working with the United States Secret Service to investigate crimes and ultimately make the children in our communities safer. And, I cannot overemphasize the importance of citizens who are willing to report suspected abuse to authorities."

On March 10, 2009, the White County Sheriff's Office was contacted by an individual regarding allegations of child abuse contained in an online chat conversation involving Mulherin. The individual advised that Mulherin stated he had a deep dark secret that he liked boys and girls from ages four to twelve. That same day, deputies with the White County Sheriff's Office went to Mulherin's residence. When advised of the allegations and his Miranda rights, Mulherin admitted that he had been viewing and downloading child pornography. The officers seized several computers from Mulherin's residence and enlisted the assistance of the Secret Service for forensic examination.

On March 19, 2009, Secret Service agents noticed one of the hard drives on a seized computer was missing. The agents then interviewed Mulherin again and he confessed that he had molested a very young child for the past several years. He also confessed that he had taken nude pictures, saved the images to the computer and traded them online. A forensic examination of the seized computers revealed Mulherin had numerous images of child pornography.

Mulherin entered a guilty plea to production of child pornography on February 1, 2010. In exchange for the guilty plea, he agreed to a specific sentence and state charges against Mulherin were dismissed. Generally, those who are convicted of a federal crime serve more time because there is no parole in the federal system.

At the sentencing hearing, the Assistant U.S. Attorney presented evidence from two former cellmates of Mulherin. The evidence included stories told and writings Mulherin had authored since his arrest that described in graphic detail the molestation of multiple children. In these documents, Mulherin stated that children are sexual beings and they enjoy being abused. Mulherin further stated that when released, the first thing he would do would be to molest a child.

After hearing this evidence and considering all the facts of the case, Judge Moody rejected the agreed upon sentence of 252 months and advised Mulherin that he could withdraw his guilty plea or continue with the guilty plea and face a tougher sentence. Mulherin stated he wanted to continue with his guilty plea. The District Court then sentenced Mulherin to 360 months, the statutory maximum for the charge of production of child pornography. The Court also imposed supervised release for life and required Mulherin to register as a sex offender.

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.projectsafchildhood.gov.

This case was investigated by the White County Sheriff's Department and the United States Secret Service. Assistant United States Attorney Marsha Clevenger prosecuted the case for the United States.

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