



Department of Justice

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FORMER MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER PLEADS GUILTY TO DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Faces five-20 year prison sentence

COLUMBUS – Michael Highman, 43, of Upper Arlington pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to one count of distribution of child pornography for using an Internet site to share almost 200,000 images and movies of prepubescent teenage boys engaged in sexual acts. At the time, Highman was a teacher and boys basketball coach at Weaver Middle School in Hilliard.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced the plea entered today before U.S. District Judge Algenon L. Marbley.

Members of the FBI Columbus Cybercrimes Task Force investigating known child pornography sites on the Internet identified Highman as a user of a peer to peer file-sharing program in June 2009, and subsequently downloaded images and videos from Highman. Task Force agents seized computer storage media containing images of child pornography when they executed a search warrant of his house on October 15, 2009.

According to a statement of facts read during Highman's plea hearing, Highman admitted to investigators that he had collected and traded child pornography over the internet for several years, and possessed thousands of images and videos of child pornography.

"To this point, computer forensic examiners have not found any images of local victims on any of the computer media," Stewart said.

Distribution of child pornography is punishable by at least five and up to 20 years imprisonment. Federal law requires that he also be sentenced to at least five years and up to lifetime court supervision.

Judge Marbley ordered Highman to be held in custody pending sentencing.

Stewart commended the investigation by members of the FBI Columbus Cybercrimes Task Force, including the Upper Arlington Police Department, who assisted with the search, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Hunter who is prosecuting the case.

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