



Department of Justice

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MACON COUNTY MAN CHARGED FEDERALLY
ON THREE CHILD EXPLOITATION COUNTS

Federal Grand Jury Sitting in Charlotte Returns Indictment

CHARLOTTE, NC - JAMES RANDAL COPE, 59, also known as "rc5_20012000," of Topton, North Carolina, has been indicted by a federal grand jury sitting in Charlotte on three counts alleging violations of the federal laws prohibiting sexual exploitation of children.

Today's announcement is made by Gretchen C. F. Shappert, United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, Nathan Gray, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI for North Carolina, Cherokee County Sheriff Keith Lovin, and Director Robin Pendergraft of the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation.

On October 17, 2006, detectives with the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office arrested COPE for soliciting a child by computer and participating in the prostitution of a minor. COPE will be scheduled to make an initial appearance before a federal magistrate on the federal charges announced here today. A date for COPE's initial appearance on the federal charges has not been set. Until then COPE remains in custody in the Cherokee County jail under the state charges.

The indictment against COPE alleges in Count One that between on or about October 13, 2006 and October 16, 2006, within the Western District of North Carolina, COPE knowingly, by computer via the Internet, attempted to persuade an individual known to the Defendant as "misty," an individual whom the Defendant believed had not attained the age of 18 years, to engage in sexual activity. Counts Two and Three allege that on or about June 29, 2006, in Macon County, North Carolina, COPE, knowingly received certain computer files which contained visual depictions of minors under the age of 18 years engaging in sexually explicit conduct as defined in the federal law.

If convicted of Count One, COPE faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and maximum sentence of life imprisonment. If convicted of Counts Two and Three, COPE faces a

mandatory minimum sentence of five years and a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment. However, it is important to note that any sentence received upon conviction will be influenced by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which the Court consults in order to determine each defendant's actual sentence. Sentences are based upon a formula that takes into account the severity and characteristics of the offense and each defendant's criminal history, if any.

The charges contained in the indictment are only allegations. In the American justice system, a person is presumed innocent unless and until he or she is proven guilty in a court of law.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, 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 identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

JAMES RANDAL COPE
DOB: 3/7/47
Topton, North Carolina

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