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NEWS



Lincolnton Man Sentenced To 87 Months In Prison On Child Pornography Charges

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 09, 2012

United States Attorney Anne M. Tompkins Western District of North Carolina

STATESVILLE, N.C. – James Paul Byrd, 40, of Lincolnton, N.C. was sentenced on Wednesday, August 8, 2012 to serve 87 months in prison to be followed by 10 years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute and possess child pornography and distribution of child pornography, announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. U.S. District Court Judge Richard L. Voorhees also ordered Byrd to register as a sex offender following his release from prison.

U.S. Attorney Tompkins is joined in making today's announcement by Chris Briese, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Charlotte Division.

In November 2010, a federal indictment charged Byrd with conspiracy to distribute and possess child pornography and distribution of child pornography. Byrd pleaded guilty to the charges in July 2011. According to filed court documents and court proceedings, Byrd engaged in a conspiracy with other people to share child pornography on Facebook. Court records indicate that Byrd was a member of several Facebook groups dedicated to sharing child pornography and child erotica, including groups called "girls girls girls :)" and "little girls love to play to :)". These groups contained over 10,000 images of child pornography and child erotica. According to filed documents and statements made in court, Byrd uploaded images of child pornography to the "little girls love to play to :)" group. In August 2010, agents with the FBI executed a search warrant at Byrd's residence and seized multiple computers and storage media. Hundreds of images of child pornography were located on these items. Court records show that the images included violent depictions of children being raped and abused.

"Mr. Byrd used computer technology, including social media and the Internet, in the worst possible way. He viewed and shared child pornography and, in doing so, he perpetuated the victimization of innocent children. This case is an example of my office's commitment to protecting our children and our communities from child predators, and to combating this form of child exploitation," said U.S. Attorney Tompkins.

Byrd, who has been in local federal custody since he pleaded guilty in July 2011, will be transferred to the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a facility. Federal sentences are served without the possibility of parole.

The investigation was handled by the FBI. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cortney S. Escaravage of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte and Trial Attorney LisaMarie Freitas of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Department of Justice.

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 U.S. 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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