



Department of Justice

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Frankfort Man Pleads Guilty to Attempting to Entice a Minor Online

FRANKFORT, Ky.- A Frankfort, Ky., man, Ricky Joe Cornish Jr., 33, pleaded guilty in federal court on Thursday, before U.S. District Judge Gregory F. VanTatenhove, to using the internet to attempt to persuade, induce, or entice a minor to engage in sexual activity.

According to his plea agreement, on May 16, 2019, Cornish contacted an individual who self-identified as a 15-year-old female living in Franklin County, Kentucky, using the MeetMe/Skout messenger application over the Internet, on his cellular telephone. The person Cornish contacted was, in reality, an adult male investigator with the Kentucky Office of the Attorney General's Cyber Crimes Branch ("the UC"). The UC indicated that her 17-year-old female cousin was with her, and Cornish expressed interest in having sex with the 17-year-old.

Later on May 16, 2019, Cornish drove to an agreed upon hotel, in order to meet the UC and engage in criminal sexual activity. When Cornish arrived at the agreed-upon meeting place in Franklin County, he was arrested by law enforcement. Law enforcement examined his cell phone, which revealed the conversation with the UC, as well as a similar conversation with another presumably minor female.

Cornish was indicted in March 2020.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Ralph Gerds, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service Louisville Field Division; and Daniel Cameron, Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, jointly announced the conviction.

The investigation was conducted by United States Secret Service and Kentucky Attorney General's Cyber Crimes Branch. The U.S. Attorney's Office was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney David Marye.

Cornish is scheduled to be sentenced on December 8 in Lexington. He faces a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison, and a maximum fine of \$250,000. However, any sentence will be imposed by the Court after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal sentencing statutes.

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