Beat: News

Former Substitute Teacher Sentenced

40 Years in Prison for Sextortion

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USPA NEWS - What follows is a press release from the Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Minnesota on April 25, 2022.

A Carver County man was sentenced to 480 months in prison, followed by 25 years of supervised release, for producing child pornography and extortion related to a years-long sextortion scheme, announced United States Attorney Andrew M. Luger.

"For nearly a decade, Mitchell Ottinger engaged in a sextortion scheme that targeted dozens of vulnerable, young victims. This predator will now spend the next 40 years behind bars," said U.S. Attorney Luger. "The U.S. Attorney's Office stands united with our law enforcement partners in combatting child sexual exploitation."

"Today's crippling sentence reflects the heinous nature of the defendant's crimes, as he used his position of trust and authority to find his victims, and traumatize them," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Michael Paul. "Sextortion is a crime that can victimize any child and the FBI will continue to work with our partners and in our communities to make sure our children know that help is available and that we will spare no effort in hunting down their predators."

According to court documents, Mitchell James Ottinger, 25, a former substitute teacher and paraprofessional, engaged in a scheme to obtain sexually explicit images and videos of minors and adults by using false online personas. Ottinger threatened to disseminate the images and videos of his victims in order to extort more images and videos. Over the course of several years Ottinger victimized 42 people, including at least 23 minors, some of whom he knew from the school district where he worked.

Law enforcement was alerted to the sextortion when one of the victims contacted the FBI's National Threat Operations Center and reported the threats.

Ottinger was sentenced late last week by U.S. District Judge Wilhelmina M. Wright. At sentencing, Judge Wright commented that Ottinger committed heinous crimes that introduced grievous harm and suffering into the lives of his victims. On October 19, 2021, Ottinger pleaded guilty to two counts of production and attempted production of child pornography and one count of interstate communication with intent to extort.

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, 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.projectsafechildhood.gov.

If you know of any child who may have been a victim of exploitation, please call the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or visit NCMEC's web site at www.missingkids.com.

This case is the result of investigations conducted by the FBI and the Carver County Sheriff's Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Miranda E. Dugi prosecuted the case.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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