

Scottsburg man involved in child pornography gets 75 years behind bars

Written by Marty Randall

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Mark William Armstrong, the Scottsburg man arrested in 2008 and charged with production of child pornography, will most likely spend the rest of his life behind bars.

Armstrong was sentenced to 75 years on Monday, November 23, in U.S. District Court by Judge David F. Hamilton. Armstrong had pleaded guilty to three counts of production of child pornography. Because he was convicted of a federal crime, Armstrong will only receive 60 days of credit for time served per year he serves; consequently, he will not be eligible for release for more than 62 years. Armstrong is 40 years old.

Chief Judge Hamilton also imposed a lifetime supervised release following Armstrong's completion of his prison sentence. During any period of supervised release, Armstrong must be registered as a sexual offender for life and may not have any unsupervised contact with a minor child.

He was also fined \$25,000.

The case began in early March of this year when a special agent with the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Division met with members of a South African law enforcement agency engaged in an investigation of international child pornography.

The ICE agent was told that the South African officials had received information that three individuals were exchanging e-mails containing images of minor children engaging in sexually explicit behavior with adults. The South African group suspected that one of the three lived in the United States and was sexually abusing a minor child. That individual identified himself as Mark Armstrong and discussed his molestation of the minor child in the e-mails. He also attached photos depicting sexually explicit conduct between an unidentified adult male and a minor child.

The information was forwarded on to ICE's Cyber Crime Center (C3). C3 staff members obtained information concerning the e-mail address used by the individual claiming to be Armstrong. This subscriber information listed the user as Mark Armstrong with a physical address in Scottsburg.

On March 20, C3 forwarded the information to the ICE office in Indianapolis. After obtaining legal process for more information on addresses, investigators determined that log-ins to the subject e-mail account were done from Mark Armstrong's residence.

On April 2, a search warrant was served on Armstrong's home, located on Owen Street. Armstrong waived his rights and told investigators that he had been molesting a male child less than 12 years old and had "...produced and disseminated images of that conduct, including images of sexual acts and conduct." Armstrong also admitted to having produced an unlawful image of a second male child less than 12 years old and of producing each of the images discovered in South Africa. He identified the child as well being the adult male in those photos. He explained to agents that he had used a digital camera to take the images and then exchanged them with individuals he met on-line for similar images of other minor children. He said he sent sexually explicit images of the first minor male to individuals Armstrong believed to be in South Africa and Mexico.

In total, Armstrong estimated he produced around 50 images involving the two boys.

Armstrong was arrested on April 2, appeared at an initial court hearing on April 3 and has remained in custody while the case progressed in U.S. District Court.

The case was developed as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat growing child sexual exploitation and abuse. The initiative was launched in May, 2006, by the U.S. Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' offices and the Criminal Division's Child

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Exploitation and Obscenity Section, officials of Project Safe Childhood use federal, state and local resources to locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet as well as identify and rescue victims.

More information about Project Safe Childhood can be obtained by visiting www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

Assistance in developing the case against Armstrong was provided by the Fishers Police Department, the Indiana State Police and the Hamilton County Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, all in Indiana, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.