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Contact: Public Affairs Officer
Phone: (503) 727-1000
USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov

Coos Bay Man Sentenced to 25 Years in Federal Prison for Sexually Exploiting a Minor

EUGENE, Ore.—A Coos Bay, Oregon man was sentenced to federal prison Wednesday for taking sexually explicit images of a minor.

Willard Verdell Cowan, 61, was sentenced to 300 months in federal prison followed by a lifetime term of supervised release.

According to court documents, beginning in early 2021, Cowan offered to talk with a minor who often suffered from panic attacks. Instead, he preyed on the victim's vulnerability by providing alcohol and marijuana before sexually assaulting the victim. Cowan continued to sexually abuse the victim, at times recording the abuse and soliciting sexually explicit images from the minor, until he was arrested in March 2023.

On February 16, 2023, a federal grand jury in Eugene returned a two-count indictment charging Cowan with sexually exploiting a child and distributing child pornography.

On August 21, 2024, Cowan pleaded guilty to sexually exploiting a child.

This case was investigated by the FBI and Coos County Sheriff's Office. It was prosecuted by Jeffrey S. Sweet, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon, in coordination with the Coos County District Attorney's Office.

Anyone who has information about the physical or online exploitation of children are encouraged to call the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324) or submit a tip online at tips.fbi.gov.

The FBI CETF conducts sexual exploitation investigations, many of them undercover, in coordination with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. CETF is committed to locating and arresting those who prey on children as well as recovering and assisting victims of sex trafficking and child exploitation.

Federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor. It is important to remember child sexual abuse material depicts actual crimes being committed against children. Not only do these images and videos document the victims' exploitation and abuse, but when shared across the internet, re-victimize and re-traumatize the child victims each time their abuse is viewed. To learn more, please visit the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at www.missingkids.org.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Justice Department to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc.

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