



Alton Man Sentenced to 33 Years in Prison for Live Streaming Sexual Abuse of a Child

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - United States Attorney Steven D. Winhoeft announced today that Travis J. Varble, 42, has been sentenced to more than 33 years in federal prison and a lifetime term of supervised release for live streaming the sexual abuse of a child.

“It is difficult to imagine much that is more reprehensible than molesting a child, but Mr. Varble found a way to aggravate his deviance by live streaming the abuse over the internet for other depraved individuals to view. This case highlights the fact that child pornography isn’t a crime involving anonymous images on the internet. Rather, each image represents a real person, a child, being overpowered by an adult who knows better. And we will prosecute these cases as aggressively as the law allows,” said US Attorney Steve Weinhoeft.

Varble was caught after law enforcement officials in Auburn, Ala., conducting an unrelated investigation discovered a recorded video containing child pornography. The perpetrator and child victim depicted in the video were unidentified, so officers forwarded the evidence to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in an effort to identify the victim and/or assailant depicted in the video.

NCMEC is supported by a number of law enforcement partners, including Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), which is the criminal investigative arm of U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE, through HSI, operates the National Child Victim Identification System (NCVIS). The NCVIS uses advanced analytics to identify and rescue child victims as well as identify and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), investigated the video recovered in Auburn, Ala., and found evidence suggesting that the sexual abuse may have taken place in Southern Illinois. HSI investigators in St. Louis were assigned and determined that the perpetrator was Travis Varble, of Alton. HSI also discovered a second video of Varble sexually abusing the same child. HSI learned that Varble live streamed his sexual abuse while the exploitation occurred, and that others viewing the live stream recorded the abuse and further distributed the recorded videos on the internet.

Evidence at sentencing established that the victim was under the age of 12, and that Varble had been providing care to the child at the time when the abuse took place.

US Attorney Steve Weinhoeft said, “We praise the work done by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and their National Child Victim Identification System (NCVIS) for their efforts on this particular case, and for their ongoing effort to rescue child victims and identify those who commit these awful crimes.”

During the investigation, agents learned that Varble had been separately prosecuted in Madison County, Ill., for sexually abusing same victim. Varble was sentenced to a 17-year prison sentence in Danville Correctional Center for predatory criminal sexual assault of a victim under 13 and aggravated criminal sexual abuse of a victim under 13 in the state court prosecution.

Varble was indicted federally in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois on March 21, 2018, for two counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (Counts 1 and 2) and one count of Distribution of Child Pornography (Count 3). He pleaded guilty on January 17, 2019, and was sentenced on August 1, 2019, to 398 months in federal prison, which is to be followed by a lifetime term of supervised release on each count.

United States District Court Judge Staci M. Yandle handed down the sentence. The sentence she imposed was initially calculated at 444 months; however, Judge Yandle gave Varble credit for 46 months that he had already served in state prison for related criminal conduct, thereby resulting in a 398-month sentence. The federal prison term was ordered to run concurrently with the state sentence Varble is currently serving.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals, who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc. For more information about internet safety education, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab "resources."

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security – Homeland Security Investigations. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Angela Scott.