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# Virginia man sentenced to 23 years in prison for traveling to Haiti and engaging in illicit sexual conduct

WASHINGTON – A Virginia man was sentenced today to 276 months in prison, to be followed by a life term of supervised release, for traveling from the United States to Haiti and engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor, Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Thomas T. Cullen of the Western District of Virginia and Special Agent in Charge Patrick J. Lechleitner of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Washington, D.C., announced.

This sentenced resulted from an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

James Daniel Arbaugh, 40, of Stuarts Draft, Virginia, pleaded guilty on Feb. 6, to one count of traveling in foreign commerce from the United States to Haiti in or about 2016 to engage in illicit sexual conduct with a person under the age of 18 before U.S. District Court Judge Elizabeth K. Dillion of the Western District of Virginia, who sentenced him earlier today and remanded him to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

> "This kind of heinous and evil activity has no place here, abroad or in-transit," said Special Agent in Charge Lechleitner. "Those seeking to commit such abhorrent crimes and evade detection cannot hide from our highly skilled and dedicated investigators."

"James Arbaugh was a wolf in sheep's clothing: he posed as a selfless missionary when in reality he was exploiting his position to prey on and sexually abuse vulnerable children in one of the most impoverished areas of the world," said Assistant Attorney General Benczkowski. "Today's sentencing is a testament to the unwavering commitment of our prosecutors and law enforcement partners to hold sexual predators like Arbaugh accountable for their deplorable crimes."

"The defendant abused his position of trust to prey on vulnerable victims, and their lives will never be the same," said U.S. Attorney Cullen. "As this case indicates, our office is committed to working with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to identify and vigorously prosecute those who exploit children."

According to admissions made in connection with his guilty plea, Arbaugh has lived in Haiti for approximately 15 years and has traveled regularly back to the United States during that time. According to statements made by the Court during Armbaugh's sentencing hearing, during his time in Haiti, Arbaugh traveled as a Mennonite missionary regularly visiting remote towns and villages, where he would befriend and groom children in these communities. Arbaugh admitted that in 2016, while in Haiti, he engaged in illicit sexual contact with a minor under the age of 12 by touching the minor's genitals under the minor's clothing.

The investigation of the case was conducted by HSI and the Harrisonburg Police Department. This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Kaylynn Shoop of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeb Terrien of the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Western District of Virginia.

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 CEOS, 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 http://www.justice.gov/psc.

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