

# Cody Wilson pleads guilty to lesser charge, will register as sex offender



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- Cody Wilson (far right) sits in the front row for his first court appearance related to charges of sexual assault against a female minor.  
Nathan Mattise
- The Blackwell-Thurman Criminal Justice Center at the Travis County Justice Complex (Wilson appeared in court on the 9th floor today)  
Nathan Mattise
- The Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse is the other piece of the Justice Complex in downtown Austin.  
Nathan Mattise

- The original courthouse was built back in 1930, and today it's an entire complex off 11th Street with the more modern Blackwell-Thurman legal building next door.

Nathan Mattise

AUSTIN, Texas—This morning, almost one year after an initial warrant for his arrest went out, Cody Wilson stood stoically in front of Judge Brad Urrutia in the 450th Criminal District Court in Travis County as cameras and a packed gallery watched. The founder and former director of firearms technology company Defense Distributed soon pleaded guilty to lesser charges stemming from an August 2018 incident with a female minor.

Sporting a dark grey suit, Wilson's previously defiant public persona was nowhere to be found. Instead, the entire appearance proceeded matter of factly, and it was an event of few words. Judge Urrutia read the charge changes and went over the situation with Wilson and his attorneys; Wilson's team would respond briefly with "Yes, your honor." Wilson arrived early alongside his attorneys, but within approximately a half hour it was all over. A plead had been entered, and his team left the room as video cameras trailed behind.

Prior to appearing in court, Wilson and his attorneys, F. Andino Reynal and Joseph Turner, bargained with the state of Texas to amend charges against the 3D-printed gun activist. Instead of sexual assault, Wilson stood accused of injury to a child, a lesser felony than what he originally faced. His guilty plea this morning now comes with a recommended seven-year probation period during which Wilson must register as a sex offender.

Wilson's formal sentencing has been scheduled for September 12. Should the plead be accepted by Judge Urrutia as anticipated, Wilson will avoid prison in favor of that multi-year probation. As the Austin-Statesman American reported, Wilson forfeited his personal firearms last year when he was

released from jail on bond. Under the terms of his probation, he would not be able to own a gun during that period.

## **What brought Wilson to court today**

According to court documents, authorities believed Wilson solicited the underage girl from a website called SugarDaddyMeet.com and eventually engaged in sexual acts with her on August 15, 2018. News of the arrest warrant for Wilson broke about a month later as he was out of the country in Taiwan. He seemed to be evading capture by posing as a US college student, but authorities in the US and Taipei eventually collaborated to apprehend Wilson and bring him back to the US.

In December 2018, the State of Texas finally formally indicted (PDF) Wilson on multiple charges: four counts of sexual assault of a child, two charges of indecency with a child by contact, and two charges of indecency with a child by exposure. The charges were all second-degree felonies punishable by up to 20 years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000. Those charges were lessened prior to this morning's initial court appearance.

In his original five-page affidavit (PDF), Austin Police Department detective Shaun Donovan outlined the initial evidence against Wilson from the night in question. It included surveillance videos from what is believed to be a coffee shop rendezvous point and the hotel where the incident reportedly took place. Police found a Black Ford Edge SUV in these videos registered to Defense Distributed. Later, they obtained "digital valet receipts" from the hotel showing the SUV was returned to Wilson later that night. Police also discovered hotel records pinpointing Wilson as the lone registered guest for the room in question on the night of the alleged incident.

Subsequent warrants only gathered more information. The first

(PDF) wanted all stored files about the Sanjuro account from SugarDaddyMeet, including things like images, file transfers, Web access logs, credit and billing information, IP addresses, and more. A second warrant (PDF) focused on Apple, asking for device and account information for Wilson's iPhone, photos and videos stored to his iCloud account, and iMessage and SMS messages between Wilson and the girl. And a third warrant (PDF) asked for permission to seize photo evidence of Wilson's groin and upper leg area, since the alleged victim initially told authorities she and Wilson exchanged nude photos and the affidavit states Wilson has a "uniquely identifiable skin condition."

As Austin-American Statesman criminal reporter Ryan Autullo reported, Wilson's lawyers had been insisting Wilson did not know the girl was underage. SugarDaddyMeet requires users to check a box stating they are 18, but Texas law puts it on the adult to verify the age of consent (which is 17 in the state).

*This is a developing story. Ars will be updating it as new information becomes available.*

*Listing image by Nathan Mattise*

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